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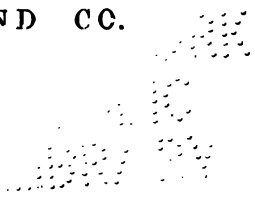
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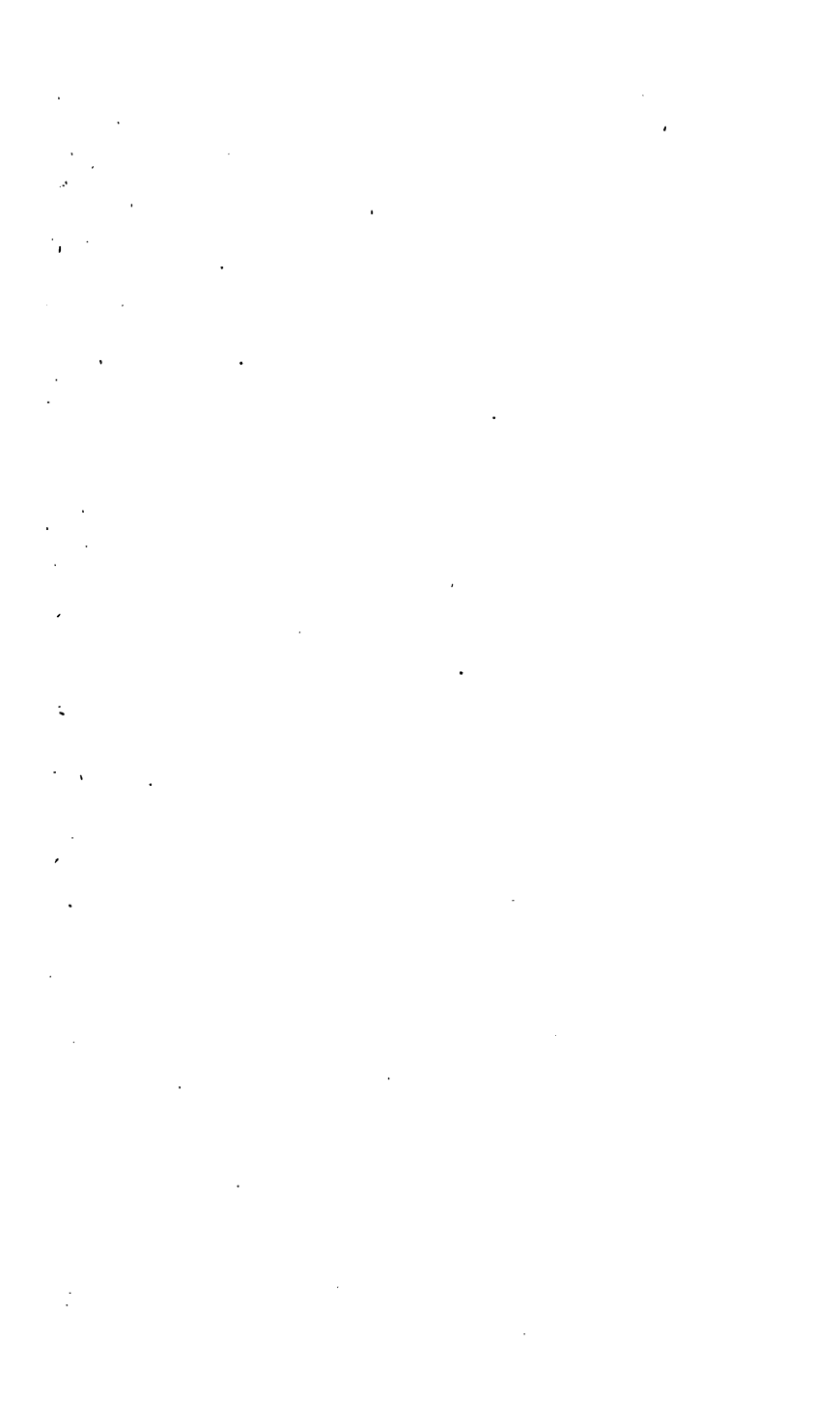
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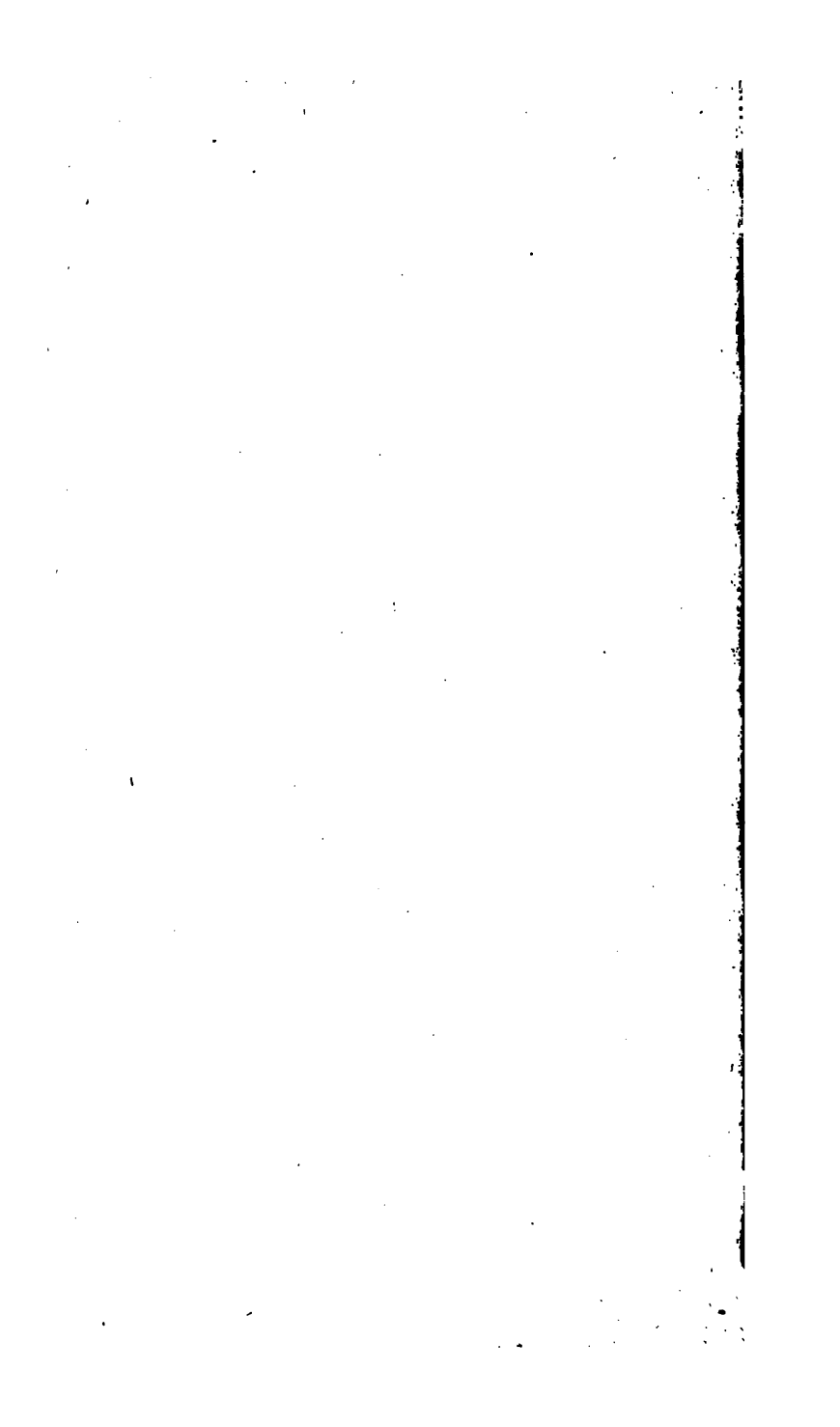


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# A YORK AND A LANCASTER ROSE.

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## CHAPTER I.

### THE GATE AT THE HEAD OF THE WAY.

"AUNT RACHEL, don't you think that driving about the streets in London, on a rainy day like this, when it is getting late, is about the nicest thing one can do?"

"I am glad you like it so well, my dear Rose, as you and I are doing it together to-day; but I confess I prefer driving on a fine morning, and in the country."

"Well, perhaps—but Auntie, don't you think, really, that it is very nice to see all one can see now from the carriage-window? The gas flaming in all the shops, making the lobsters look so very red, and the oranges so very yellow, and the wet streets shining underneath, and the people running against each other with their dripping umbrellas, and the little streams of water in the gutters running and bubbling along. I like looking out of the school-room window on rainy afternoons, though there are no shops in our square. Fräulein von Bohlen says it makes her melancholy, and I can't think why it should; it never makes me melancholy, though of course I had a thousand times rather be driving about these delightful wet streets with you."

"I am glad I have given you such a treat, my dear, without intending it."

"It was very good of you, Aunt Rachel, to call for me this rainy day. When Anne came into the school-room, and told me I was to go down to my godmother, I quite trembled, for I thought it could not be you. I thought it was my other godmother, Lady Dunallan, and I did not want to go down to see *her*."

"I thought she was so kind to you?"

"So she is—she gave us our croquet things, and almost every time she calls she brings me a present; but I dread seeing her all the same. She pinches my cheeks, and calls me a *Lancaster Rose*; and you must allow, Aunt Rachel, that it is very horrid to have a name that people are always turning into puns or remarks on one's looks; and for one's own godmother to be worse than anyone else about it! She ought not to tease me with the name that she gave me herself—now ought she?"

"I must acknowledge, however, Rose, that I am answerable for your name, and not Lady Dunallan. I was guilty of calling you a Rose-bud the first time I saw your little red face, an hour or two after you were born; and it was considered such an appropriate name, that it was adopted!"

"It was the only tiresome thing you ever did, Aunt Rachel; and I forgive you because you are so nice about everything else. No one but you would take me such a long drive on *such* a rainy afternoon. I suppose, Auntie, you gave orders that we were to be driven on and on a long way; for we have passed the turning into Russell Square ages ago. We are far beyond Oxford Street now, in a part of London I never saw before. Do you think old Stephen is doing it on purpose, Auntie? Does he know where he is going?"

"You may trust old Stephen for that, I think, Rose; and to tell you the truth, I don't think I should have ventured to ask him to drive about on such an evening as this for your amusement merely. I have business in a hospital in the North of London, that must be attended to at once, and I thought you had rather drive there with me, than lose your turn of spending a Sunday with Grandmamma and me."

"Oh, that I had; I only hope the place is miles away."

"But then we should have very much less time to spend when we got there, and I expect you will be interested in the place. I am afraid I shall not be able to take you into the wards where the sick people are: but while I am busy there, I shall leave you in a room where I expect you will find a great deal to amuse you."

"Have Maggie or Claude ever been to this hospital with you?"

"No; I have only lately visited it myself."

"Then I shall be the first to tell the others about it. How lucky! Auntie, what miserable little streets we are getting into, and what crowds of people there are standing about in the rain! Look at that little girl by the fruit-stall. She has no bonnet on, and the rain is pouring down on to her hair, and she does not seem to mind it a bit. I wonder if it feels nice."

"She is looking after you, Rose—see, she forgets to pay for the orange she has chosen, from staring after you, and wondering, I dare say, how nice it feels to ride in a carriage on a rainy day, with a warm straw hat trimmed with velvet on one's head."

"I wish I had thought of nodding to her. She can't be very, very poor—can she, Auntie, as she buys oranges? It must be rather nice, don't you think, for a little girl

not so big as me to walk about in the rain without anybody fussing, and to go to stalls and places, and buy things just as it comes into her head?"

"Or just as she happens to have a halfpenny in her pocket. When there is not one there, she must stand and see other people buy, whether it is bread or only oranges she is in need of. I don't suppose she finds all she wants ready on the table at home, without her even having to think how it came there."

"But I hope that girl always has halfpennies in her pocket, and that she can buy oranges and hot potatoes and coffee and rolls in the streets, whenever she is the least bit hungry. I don't think I should mind having to do that myself—I think it would be an amusing sort of life. Of course there would be some disagreeable things about it; such as being rather dirty, and perhaps cold sometimes; but to set against that, there would be the advantage of never having to speak French or German. You don't know what a great difference that would make in one's life, Aunt Rachel. How very, very much happier one would feel, if one knew one never need speak a word of German again. Since the Fräulein came we are expected to speak it, even after tea. I should be talking German this minute, if you had not come for me, Aunt Rachel."

If Aunt Rachel thought her little companion was making the most of her opportunity to get through a great deal of talk in English—she did not say so. The carriage had now turned out of the thoroughfare into a narrow side-street, still worse lighted and worse paved than those they had lately traversed; and after driving on a short distance, stopped before a little house with a half-door like an old-fashioned shop-door and some steep steps leading up to it.

"Here we are at the home of the 'Sisters of Consolation.' Rose," Aunt Rachel said, "you may get out first and ring the bell." Rose paused on the steps, with the bell-handle in her hand, to peep over the half-door which formed the entrance to the house. It opened on to a long stone passage, with one door at the end, and two on each side. One of the side-doors stood wide open, and gave Rose a glimpse into a room full of a ruddy glow of fire-light, which looked very inviting from the wet, dark, muddy street outside. Somehow, it made her think of a picture at the beginning of an illustrated 'Pilgrim's Progress' they had at home, and she quite forgot to pull the bell, as her thoughts flew off to the wicket-gate in the picture, and to Christian standing without, with the burden on his back, waiting for a Shining One to come and let him through. How vehemently she had wished last Sunday that she could get to such a gate really herself, and have it opened to her. "Please, miss, you must give the bell a sharp pull—it catches sometimes—and then it 'll ring." Rose turned round startled, and saw that there were other people waiting in the rain, on the steps, to be let in, as well as herself. While she had been holding the bell-handle two other figures had come up to the door; a woman, with a large white pitcher in her hand, and a little girl in a very shabby frock, who again addressed Rose. "I knows how to pull it, miss—let me;" and as the child came forward, and the light from inside fell on her face, Rose recognised the little orange buyer at the fruit-stall, whom she had pointed out to her aunt a few minutes before; yes, and she had the very orange she had been buying then in her hand, and the rain was still trickling from the wet ends of her draggled hair on to her thin frock,

and on to the little knitted worsted shawl, within which she was trying to hide her shivering arms. "That's the way, miss; push hard, and the Sisters will let us in in a minute, to the fire." The little girl had passed Rose now, and was looking over the low door, towards the lighted room with something in her eyes (great black eyes they were, staring out of pale cheeks) that again made Rose think of the wicket-gate, and Christian outside with his burden. The girl looked so eagerly and longingly towards the light, as if she really did expect a Shining One to come out of it and welcome her in, out of the darkness and the rain. Rose stepped back, and caught Aunt Rachel's hand, feeling a little odd when, just as the bell ceased tinkling, a lady in a plain dark dress with a white apron on and a close white cap on her head, came down the steps, and unlocked the gate, and bade them enter. There was some delay in the passage; the woman with the pitcher, and the bare-headed girl, disappeared through the door at the far-end, and then Aunt Rachel, pointing to another door, said to Rose, "I must go in here, to see a sick person who has sent for me, and cannot take you with me; but Sister Helen says you may go with her into the reception-room, and if I am detained longer than I expect, she will let you take tea with the Sisters. Perhaps she may even find something for you to do, if I am long away; but if not, you must keep quiet, and not trouble any one, for Saturday afternoon is a very busy time here."

Rose Ingram was not a particularly shy child; and if she had been, Sister Helen had one of those faces that put shyness out of the question. "Yes, come into the reception-room to the fire," she said, taking

Rose's hand, and leading her towards the open door through which the ruddy glow came. "I don't know how it will be about finding you something to do; but you can, at all events, sit among the other children, and talk to them. We are always very busy on a Saturday afternoon."

No wonder a ruddy glow streamed out of the reception-room into the dark street, for when you got inside it looked a very cavern of light and warmth. It was a long low room, with a red-brick floor, and stuccoed walls of a warm colour; and in one corner there was a great fire-place, in which a very bright fire was burning. There were a good many people in the room: most of them congregated round a table in the centre, on which were piles of clothing; but there was a clear space round the fire-place, and Sister Helen drew a straw chair in front of the blaze, and told Rose to sit down. "Near the fire is the children's corner," she said. "They all congregate there, as fast as they come in; you'll soon find some one to talk to."

"Might any one come in out of the wet street that wished to come?" Rose wondered, when the Sister had left her and gone to the centre-table; and she sat and stared at the red caves in the coals, then all around at a scene that was very strange to her—more like a picture, she again said to herself, than anything she had ever seen before. There was a hearth-rug made of knitted strips of cloth, in front of the fire; but instead of a fender, there was round the hearth a row of low benches of painted wood, just high enough and wide enough to make very comfortable seats for small people to sit on. One had an occupant when Rose came in—a boy with a very humped back, and a good-



tempered face, who made Rose feel shy, by smiling very broadly at her every time she turned her head his way, as if he expected her to notice him. She wished she could think of anything to say to him, but nothing would come into her mind. To avoid his eye, she twisted her chair a little round, and looked through the open door, to the street. Every five minutes or so a little group collected on the steps again. Sometimes it was only a troop of ragged children, who thrust their faces over the half-door, and said to each other, "Ah, there's the fire, don't it look warm and nice!" and then trotted off again down the dark street, and were seen no more; sometimes the bell tinkled, and then Sister Helen went to the entrance and let somebody in. Women with babies in their arms; lame men with baskets.

At last, that is five minutes after Rose began to look, it was a party of children who were ushered in by the Sister. "There, go and sit by the fire till tea-time," Rose heard Sister Helen say to them. And with the air of people accustomed to the ways of the place, they trotted in, made directly for the fire-place, and established themselves on the low bench, directly in front of Rose. Poor little shabby wet frocks, and stockingless feet in worn shoes, that showed the red chilblained toes through, and shock-heads of tangled hair through which curious bright eyes peeped up at Rose sitting in state in her straw chair. These particulars had caught Rose's eye before she had had time to count the shock-heads, or to decide which of the ragged figures were little boys, and which little girls. The next thing she made out was, that the child with the cleanest face of the party, who might be about six years old herself, was elder sister to three of the little ones. How she

did pull them and order them about, to be sure; and how resolute she was that her three should have the best places by the fire, and the most room to spread out the wet ends of their shawls and their draggled skirts to the blaze to dry; and when the middle-sized bundle of wet clothes fell backwards off the bench among the cinders, how quick she was to drag it out; and how anxiously she looked it over, before giving it a slap on the back and perching it in its place again. "There now, Teddy, sit still, can't ye?" she cried; "look at Polly, she never gives no trouble; she never falls over and messes herself like you do." So the one with a dirty worsted comforter tied round him was a boy, and called Teddy; and the one that looked all shawl, was Polly—a baby girl. Rose was still occupied with the interest of this discovery, when Sister Helen had occasion to come near the fire, and nodded to her, with a smile that seemed to Rose to say, "Well, you have got plenty of companions now, why don't you find something to say to them?" How Rose wished she could! It really seemed as hard to begin a conversation here, as if one were expected to speak German. Just as she was beginning to despair of anything to say ever coming to her again, she felt her frock pulled, and saw that one of the children was preparing to address her. It was the dirtiest, not the cleanest, of the two elder girls; and for a moment, Rose felt doubtful as to whether she liked such a very grimy hand on her frock, and was half disposed to get up and walk to the centre table, and stand near Sister Helen till tea-time.

"Be you the young lady as 'as a bag?" the grimy-handed girl began in a rough voice.

Before Rose was ready with an answer, the little

elder sister put in her word. "Mary Anne, for shame! you should not ketch hold of the young lady's frock—she don't like it, and she ain't the young lady with the bag—she ain't a bit like her."

Rose was decidedly sorry to hear this, it quite determined her to stay and talk. "I—I have a bag at home," she began timidly. The information excited immense interest. Teddy, who since the slap on his back had been crying quietly to himself, now took his thumb out of his mouth, and grinned from ear to ear with delight.

The elder children exchanged looks. "She says she's got a bag—oh, ain't it a pity she has not brought it with her?"

"But my bag is only a work-bag," Rose went on, a little crest-fallen; "there's nothing in it, just now, but silks and perforated card; you would not care to see it."

"It ain't like the other young lady's bag, then?"

"What does she have in hers?"

"Oh, dollies and tin soldiers, and little carts and 'orses, and cakes, and sweeties!" cried Teddy, clapping his hands, and fairly laughing with delight at the sound of his own words.

"And she gives those nice things to you, does she?"

"To us! No. We ain't sick, we ain't in the 'ospital; we don't get toys give to us," said the grimy-handed girl, in a deplorable voice. "She lets us look into her bag, and then she takes it up into the ward, and gives the things away there, all of 'em. I never have none give to me."

"Oh, Mary Anne, what a story! you know you had a lovely toy give to you last Christmas, off of the young lady's tree; and you went and lost it, you did."

"I ain't lost it; I had no place to put it in, and it was took from me."

"But have you really no place to keep your toys in, at your house?" asked Rose, anxiously.

Mary Anne, who wore a shapeless bonnet with a dirty flower in it, below her neck, instead of on her head, and who (dirt apart) had not what Rose called a very nice face, laughed a little contemptuously at this question. "I ain't got no place to keep nothink in, I ain't," she said; "I ain't got no home in particlar."

"But you have some place to sleep in, surely?" cried Rose, aghast.

"I used to sleep in old mother Turner's house, under the stairs; but now Sisters 'ave took me away from her, and found another place for me to sleep in. I 'as most of my victual 'ere now, but I goes out in the streets and sells matches whenever I can."

"But Sisters don't like you to run about the streets, Mary Anne, you know," interrupted the other little girl, emphatically. "You are to go to school now. Oh, you know."

Quelled by this admonition, Mary Anne retreated to her former place, on the corner of the bench furthest from the fire; and Rose with a sense of relief, turned to the (tolerably) clean child, who had now tucked the ends of her hair tidily behind her ears, and showed a nice little face, that, pale and thin as it was, had a brisk, capable, resolute expression on it, such as Rose had never seen in any small face before. "Have you got any toys?" she asked, by way of keeping up the conversation.

"Oh yes, miss, that we 'ave—we've got a bag of marbles, such pretty uns; I found 'em in the street last Saturday, and Sisters said I might keep 'em, and there

was four for each of us. I've all mine now; I keeps 'em in a hole in the wall at home, quite safe. Teddy 'as lost all of his, he's so unlucky, Teddy is; but, please miss, I'm very lucky. Once I found a threepenny-bit in the gutter, and I give it to mother, and father said I was a lucky little girl."

"I ain't a lucky little girl," put in Mary Anne, from her corner; "I never finds threepenny-bits in the gutter; I never picks up no bags of marbles."

"But I give you one of them marbles, Mary Anne, you know I did. Ain't you got it in your pocket now? You've never been and gone and lost that, too! Oh *you are an unlucky girl!*"

"But do you care so much for marbles to play with?" asked Rose, with a vivid recollection of the litter of marbles that strewed the floor of the toy-cupboard at home, and were despised as rubbish by the elder children. Have not you any dolls? Don't you like best to play with dolls?"

"Oh, that we do, please, miss; we had a doll once; and oh, she was a sweet thing!—Was not she, Mary Anne? You know I let you have her to nurse on the steps iver so long one day. It was when mother was well, we had her. Mother went out to char, and they was shifting house, the people was, that mother went to; and mother found the doll among a heap of things they left behind for her to take away. It hadn't got a head, but it had real shoes and stockings; and we made believe always it was asleep, and covered its face with the ends of our shawls. Oh, miss, it was lovely, the plays we had with her; but one day Teddy cried so to carry her himself, that Rosie let him, and he hung her over his shoulder, and went down the street, and a big boy came behind and snatched her away,

and ran off, and we've never seen her since, miss, never. It always happens so if we let Teddy have things, he always loses 'em. I never do let him have nothink, because I know he's that unlucky; but Rosie will, she can't ever abear to hear the little uns cry, Rosie can't."

"Rosie! have you a sister called Rosie? how odd! Why, I'm called Rosie myself. What is your name?"

"Clara, please, miss. I'm Clara Marshall, and that's Susie, and that's Teddy, and that little un's Polly; and please, miss, mother has got baby in the hospital, upstairs; and Rosie has gone to see her this evening, and to take her an orange."

"An orange—oh, how very odd! Did she buy it at a stall just now?"

"Yes, miss; just a little while afore we come in."

"Then she's the very same little girl I saw; and she's your sister, and she's called Rosie? Dear me! how very nice and odd! Will she come in here by-and-by, do you think?"

"Yes, miss, when she has seen mother eat the orange. Mother do love oranges. Please, miss, it was along of Teddy's being so unlucky we got that one. You see, miss, Rosie and I, we try to make Teddy behave himself proper in the streets, but he won't; he's always trying to turn hisself into a coach-wheel, like the ragged boys at the corners, that mother says we don't ought to take no notice of. If we let go of Teddy's hand a moment, miss, he's off into the middle of the road, a standing on his head among the carts and the cabs and the busses, miss; and this morning, going to school, Rosie hurt her arm against the wheel of a bus, a dragging Teddy out from underneath it, and a lady that was sitting in the bus called to her, and give her a penny. Was not it lucky, miss? We had not had a

penny to spend for ever so long, and we wanted so to take something to mother."

"Is your mother very ill? has she been a long time in the hospital?"

"Since a good bit before Christmas, miss; she was very bad indeed, before Sisters found her out, but she's getting well, now they've took her in here."

"But who takes care of you while your mother is away from you?"

"Why, Rosie, to be sure. Rosie takes care of the little uns. I don't want no taking care of. I'se turned of six years old myself."

"But I mean, who lives in the house with you, and washes and dresses you, and gets your breakfast, and cooks the dinner, and everything?"

"There's father, he helps a bit. He's very good to us, is father, except when he's you know how, miss, and then Rosie never lets him leather the little uns. She promised mother she would not, and she watches, and speaks gentle to him, and keeps Teddy and Susie out of the way, so as not to vex him, when he's like that, you know, miss."

"No, I don't," cried Rosie; "and, oh dear me, I'm so sorry about it. I can't think how your Rosie can manage so well; Susie and Teddy and Polly, three of them! Do you mean that she washes and dresses them all every morning, and cuts their bread and butter, and makes the tea, and lights the fire, and everything?"

"Father lights the fire before he goes out to work, when he's got work, and we have a fire; and we don't have no tea in the morning. Rosie dresses the children, and gives us all a bit of bread and dripping, and then we goes off to school; and we have our dinner here sometimes; and Sister Teresa comes in on a Saturday

night, and washes Susie and Polly and Teddy, and tidies up a bit. Please, miss, that's Sister Teresa, coming in now, and that's our Rosie behind her. She's been across the road to the Models, to fetch old blind Ben in to tea. Please, he lives in the room next to ours, miss, and he's very fond of Rosie. She says her hymns and 'I believe' to him, on a Sunday, when we comes out of school, and she always leads him in here to have his tea on a Saturday night."

Rose Ingram turned round eagerly, to look at her namesake, as she came forward out of the dark part of the room towards the fire, following the Sister and leading a blind man by the hand. Well, at all events, Lady Dunallan would not call her a *Lancaster Rose*, and pinch her cheeks because they were so pink and plump. There was not the least bit of pink in her face, except just a thin streak in her lips, that showed as she spoke to the old man, and told him in a very soft voice that Sister Teresa had gone to fetch a chair for him to sit down by the fire. She did not look anything like as brisk and capable as Clara; and though she had the same nice, large dark eyes, she was not so pretty, nor even so tolerably clean and tidy, as the little elder sister? Yet, somehow, Rose Ingram was not disappointed in her namesake's looks. She had quite made up her mind that she liked the White Rose face very much indeed, and that in spite of the dirt, and the tired expression on it, and the wet ends of hair hanging about, it was just as nice as could be, even before she saw the sweet look that came upon it, when Polly and Teddy wriggled off their bench, and rushed forward to throw themselves upon her with odd little crowings and snortings of joy and welcome. Teddy, of course, fell foul of Sister Teresa's feet, and



grazed the end of his nose against the brick floor; but his Rosie had him up in her arms and carried him back to the fire-place so quickly, that he had not time to think about crying. She sat down herself between the two little ones, just in front of Rose Ingram, and put her arms round them. What a large black mark that was on the arm that held Teddy—but no, it was not dirt; it was a great sore bruise reaching from the elbow almost to the wrist, and there was a red bleeding spot in the middle, showing where the wheel had grazed it. Yet Rose Marshall did not seem to care much about it. She hardly winced, when Teddy, in wriggling about, hit the sore spot with his head, or when Clara nudged her elbow roughly to make her answer her eager questions—“Did mother eat up the orange, every bit, Rosie? did you see her eat it? and was it a good orange?” Now, if there was one quality that little Rose Ingram admired with all her heart, it was the power of bearing pain well; not that she had ever thought of practising it herself, but she liked to read stories of brave enduring people; and if the stories were about children, they filled her head for a long time after she had heard or read them. Even the thieving Spartan boy, who let the fox gnaw his side, was a favourite of hers: and as for “Agnes Green” and “Jeanne Parelle,” the pages in her copy of ‘Golden Deeds’ that had their histories on them, were almost worn into holes, from her having read them so many times over and over. To see a little girl just her own age, and called by her own name, behaving in the sort of way that she had so often dreamed of, and invented stories about, had a very curious effect on her. She could not understand why it was; but as she looked at

Rose Marshall's swollen arm, and heard her answer Clara in a cheerful voice, and tell her that "Mother *had* enjoyed the orange; and was not it a good thing they had got the penny to buy it!" her own heart began to beat very fast, and her face glowed, and there was a pricking in her eyes, as if she wanted to cry, and could not. "Oh dear me!" she thought, "if ever mamma could want an orange, and I could get one for her by having my arm bruised, how beautiful it would be! and yet it would not quite do to wish that mamma should ever come to wanting a single orange," Rose Ingram thought.

Just then, a door at the far-end of the reception-room opened, and a lady entered, dressed like the Sisters Rose had already seen, but looking older than they—a little statelier, too, Rose thought, though quite as cheerful and as kind. "Look!" the children whispered to each other, "there's 'mother' herself, come to tell us to come in to tea."

It took "mother" a long time to make her way to the fire-place, for every one of the women at the table wanted to speak to her; but directly she came among the children, she noticed Rose Marshall's swollen arm, and in a minute had given directions for its being washed with a lotion, that would take away the swelling and pain. "How did you come by such a severe bruise, my child?" she asked.

Then Rose Ingram saw that the other Rose could for a minute or two wear her colours. As she looked up to answer the "Mother," a bright pink mounted into her thin face, and her eyes grew very large and tender and fearful. "Please, mother, it was in the road, against the wheel of a bus, I hurt it this morning going to school." Not a word about Teddy; yet, Rose Ingram

saw as plainly as possible, that if there was a thing her namesake dreaded, it was a word of reproof from the lady into whose face she was then looking up.

"My dear, you should be careful how you cross the road, at your age, and having so many younger brothers and sisters to look after. I should have thought you would have known better than to run into such an easily avoided danger as that. I am afraid, from what Sister Teresa tells me, that you are sadly apt to let your wits go a wool-gathering, and forget how much depends on you while your mother is ill. Were you reading when this happened, Rosie? had you a book in your hand?"

"No, mother."

"Then let us all come in to tea."

The children got up and flocked towards the further door, and Rose Ingram followed last in the procession. She was biting her lips with vexation and anger at herself, for not having had presence of mind to put in a word about Teddy, in defence of her namesake, at the right moment. Fräulein von Bohlen was always telling her that her tongue led her into mischief from its being so apt to move when it ought to keep still; and now it had betrayed her in just the contrary way, by refusing to speak, when surely a word would have done good, and brought some praise to one who deserved it. To one, too, whom Rose Ingram had just five minutes ago taken into her warm eager little heart, with an earnest determination to stand up for her, and be her friend for all the rest of their lives. It must be confessed, that the Red Rose was a little apt to fall into hasty friendships, and that it had happened to her once or twice before in large London parties, to feel the same anxiety to sit near a particular little girl.

that she felt just now to sit near Rose Marshall; but hitherto it had usually been something in the face, or perhaps only in the dress, of the new favourite that had caught her fancy. She had never fallen into a liking before with this enthusiasm for something done; and never before, perhaps, felt quite so happy when her wish was gratified as she did to-night, when Sister Teresa beckoned her to a seat at the table; not, indeed, next door to her namesake, but divided from her only by Polly and Teddy. Side-by-side would not have been much gain, for everybody was too busy eating and handing about bread-and-butter, and bread-and-treacle, and hot mugs of tea, to think of saying more than a word or two now and then; but though Rose could not talk to her newly chosen friend, she could watch her, and she saw one or two little things that deepened the impression the bruised arm had created. Clara was just as much of a little "elder sister" at the tea-table as she had been at the fire-place; she watched the plates of bread-and-butter as they went round, and managed that Polly and Teddy should be helped before Mary Anne, and she would even have changed a broken mug that came to Susie, for a pretty one with a picture on it, that had been handed to blind Ben, if Sister Teresa had not gently interposed, and reminded her that it was the rule here to take contentedly what was given, and never to interfere with other people. Rose Marshall made no fuss, but Rose Ingram noticed that it was she who took Polly's crust away when she could not eat it, and gave her all the nicely buttered crumb from her own slice, and that it was she who eat up the dry remnant of Teddy's hunch, from which he had gnawed the treacle, that he might be entitled to take a second piece when the dish came round.

Rose Ingram had been to a great many crowded children's tea-parties during the winter, but at none of them did the guests appear to enjoy themselves so much, or eat so heartily. There were grown people as well as children; blind people, lame people, people with humps on their backs. The table they sat round was made of two planks of wood, set on tressels, and scoured till they were as white as snow. At the head of this board sat Mother, pouring out the tea from a huge tea-pot, and talking and laughing merrily with her neighbours. The Sisters handed about the mugs of hot tea, and the buttered and treacled slices of bread, and Rose observed that the new mugs and the best buttered slices of bread were sent down to the children. Aunt Rachel was one of the grown-up people who sat at the upper end of the table, and talked to Mother. When grace was said, and the guests had all moved away, she came to where Rose was still standing, and said, "The carriage has come for us, but I find I shall be detained an hour or two longer, and as it is raining heavily still, I must send it back again. Would you rather go home in it alone, or wait here till it comes again for me at nine o'clock? Don't stay here if you are tired."

"Tired! Oh no, Aunt Rachel, I'm not a bit tired. I think this is the nicest place I was ever in in my life. I should like you to be kept here for hours."

Aunt Rachel smiled, having had some previous experience of her little niece's sudden fits of enthusiasm; but Sister Helen, who had accompanied Aunt Rachel down the room, nodded kindly at Rose. "I'm glad you like being with us," she said; "and as you are going to stay till bedtime, I think I must really try to find you something to do. We have no place

for drones in our little hive. Now what would you like best? Will you be a little shopwoman, and help me to sell flannel petticoats at the long table in the reception-room? or could you make yourself useful to Sister Teresa, as a little under-housemaid, or nursemaid, when she goes across the street to visit the sick people in the houses opposite?"

Rose gave Sister Helen's hand such a squeeze. "Oh, please, I should like that!"

"To go with Sister Teresa? Come with me, then, and I will find an apron to tie over your frock, and you will feel yourself equipped, and the people will understand that you have come to work for them, and not to talk or to stare."

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## CHAPTER II.

### A LUMP OF COAL.

ROSE looked anxiously up into Sister Helen's face as she was tying the apron round her waist. Was it all pretence, and out of good-nature, to please her? or did the Sister really think she could help?

Sister Helen understood the look, and answered it by an encouraging smile, and a kiss on Rose's forehead. "Of course it will be all strange to you, my dear," she said; "but if you only carry a can of soup across the road, or hold a baby for five minutes to set Sister Teresa's hands free for other work, it will be something; and when you are not wanted, you must just stand aside, and not hinder. It's a great comfort when young helpers know how to do that comfortably. Look, there

is Sister Teresa at the door already; you might run and take that broom from her—she has more than she can well carry—and give a hand at the same time to Teddy Marshall down the steps; he is nearly sure to tumble and cut his nose or his lip if no one looks after him; and Rose and Clara, you see, have cans of soup in their hands.”

It was not such an easy task as might be supposed to get the broom and Teddy safely down the steps; and little Rose Ingram felt just a minute of nervous fear, and had a half thought of running back when she got into the dark street—for Sister Teresa, though she had Polly Marshall in her arms, and heaps of other things, was already some distance away down the long street; and Rosie and Clara had run on before her; and Teddy, as soon as he was on level ground, began to show symptoms of wanting to stand on his head; and there was a man with a donkey-cart full of herrings, making a dreadful noise (at least, Rose Ingram thought it a dreadful noise) in the middle of the road. However, it was only for one minute that her heart failed her; the next, the happy thought came to her of offering to give Teddy a bright penny she had in her purse if he would keep hold of her hand, and walk upright; and the bribe was so effectual, that he began to drag her on instead of holding her back; so that they were only a very few steps behind Sister Teresa, when, having crossed the street and turned into the main road, she stopped at a flight of steep stone steps before a tall brick building, very full of little windows, most of which, having no curtains or blinds, showed bright gaslights shining in the rooms, and a great many figures of men and women passing and repassing before them.

Clara, with her soup-can in her hand, turned back and joined Rose at the foot of the steps, and they dragged Teddy up between them. "That's our window," Clara said, "the dark one at the very top; the tidiest people lives at the top always—that's why mother would; but she said these steps took all the breath out of her, and wore her to pieces."

"I wonder Teddy does not tumble down them every day," Rose said.

"He do tumble down them whenever he can," Clara answered, in an aggrieved tone; "there's not a boy in the Models as 'as tumbled down the steps as often as our Teddy. Rosie and I we tell him every day that he'll kill hisself before he has done with his tumblings."

The little room was quite dark and empty when they reached it at last, but Sister Teresa struck a match, and turned the gas on; and then, having despatched Rosie and Clara to carry their soup-cans to other rooms in the same block, she and little Rose Ingram set to work. There was plenty to do; and Rose Ingram, as she looked around her, wondered what the rooms at the bottom of the building could be like, if the tidy people lived at the top. What would Nurse Lewis have said if she could be transported from the nursery at home to such a scene as this—she, who was so very indignant if a few marbles or doll's clothes were left lying about on a Saturday night? She would have thrown most of the things in this room out of the window, as unfit for any further use; and she would have ordered the floor to be scoured a dozen times at least, before she would have considered it fit for anyone to walk, much less to sleep, upon. Sister Teresa took it all much more quietly, as if she were at home in such places, and used to making them as much better



as was possible to be done in a short time. She moved briskly about, shaking and folding rags of bed-clothes, putting dirty cups and plates together to be washed, raking out the cinders from the brown, cold fire-place, and making Rose Ingram bring her half a bundle of kindling from the cupboard by the door, and a shovel-ful of coals from the black box in the corner, that served the family for a coal cellar, and Teddy for his principal in-door play-place and only toy-cupboard. It was wonderful how much she did in a short time, and perhaps more wonderful (to those who know what it is to have to deal with inexperienced zealous helpers) how she contrived to keep Rose Ingram employed in really useful ways, giving her work that her discretion was equal to, and never allowing her either to be or feel herself in the way.

In a little while, Rose Marshall and Clara came back, having accomplished their errand; and then Sister Teresa despatched Clara and Rose Ingram to beg a kettle of warm water from an old woman at the very bottom of the house, who always had a kettle of warm water ready for Sister Teresa when she wanted it; and when they came back, carrying the kettle between them, they found that the White Rose was getting a little scolding for having left her room in such an untidy state. Sister Teresa did not look angry, but there was something in her face likely to make one so much more sorry than anger ever could, that Rose could hardly bear it. This time she thought she must put in a word for her friend.

When she and Clara had deposited the heavy kettle on the hearthstone, she gave Sister Teresa's dress a little pull to attract her attention, and said panting, "Oh, her arm! Sister Teresa, how could she lift things,

and tidy, and wash, and sweep, with such a sore arm?"

Sister Teresa looked round at Rose Ingram with a brightened face. "I am glad you reminded me: there is the making of a good little Sister of Consolation in you, I see; for you observe and remember.—Yes, Rose Marshall, that is some excuse for you, certainly; but you shall judge for yourself how much. I am afraid several days' neglect must have gone to putting the room into the state in which I found it; and I think, too, you could have done something to make it better even to-day, if you had remembered."

"Yes, Sister, I have been leaving things about all the week, and to-day I meant to put them straight; and it was not my arm hindered me. I was thinking all the afternoon about taking that orange to mother, and I forgot!"

"Ah, that is your great fault—dreaming, Rose; and since you have been neglecting your work at home, all the perfect lessons you have brought to school this week, and the long sums you have done out of lesson hours, won't win you praise from Mother. She had a great deal rather hear that you had minded your duty here."

"It was not the sums, Sister, or the lessons, took up my time; it was the story-book—that one with the green cover—that made me forget everything."

"One that Sister Helen lent you out of the library?"

"No, Sister; the pretty one, bound in green and gold, with one cover torn off, that mother found among the rubbish in the empty house with the doll. Please, it's about a prince as was shut up in a valley, and got out."

"Rasselas!" exclaimed Rose Ingram, too much astonished to be able to hold her tongue. "Why, I

tried to read that, but I could not ; I thought it the dullest story-book I had ever had. Does it really make you forget things ?”

A little colour mounted into the White Rose’s cheeks, and she looked across at Rose Ingram with a grieved expression, as if something she loved very much had been maligned. “It is a pretty book, though. I read a bit out loud to father one night, and he liked it : he said he could listen ever so long, the words seemed to come out so fine.”

“But if it makes you forget to sweep up the fire-place, and wash the plates, and tidy the bed, I think you had better give it to Sister Helen to put away for you till you are wiser, Rosie. Now pour out the warm water into the tub, and get Teddy ready for me to wash him.”

When the children were all washed, and put into the one bed, and covered up as well as they could be covered with the old blanket and the ragged patched quilt, Sister Teresa said she must go to a room down-stairs, to give an old bed-ridden man his supper, and tidy his room up for Sunday. She took Clara with her to help, and told Rose Marshall she had better stay up-stairs till Teddy was asleep, for fear he should take it into his head to get out of bed again, and tumble up and down-stairs in his night-gown—a new one, which Sister Teresa had brought with her, and which Rose Ingram heard, with envy, had come originally out of “the other young lady’s bag,” and of which Teddy was so proud, that it could hardly be expected he would not make some efforts to show it to his neighbours. Rose Ingram asked if she might stay and watch, too ; and Sister Teresa said, with a kind smile, that she thought it would be a good plan.

At last, here was an opportunity of getting to know each other, and making real friends; yet, strange to say, when the two little girls were left alone together, and had settled themselves—not in the room, which Sister Teresa had left nearly dark, with only the tiniest bead of light over the gas-burner, but on the upper step of the common staircase, where far, far below they could just see the open front-door and the lights in the street—Rose Ingram felt a little shy, shyer than she had ever felt when she had set to work to make friends with a new acquaintance in a flounced muslin frock, and pink or blue sash, at a party.

It was much harder to know how to begin to talk to a little girl almost in rags, who did sums out of lesson-hours for pleasure, and had *Rasselas* for her favourite story-book. The wonder of that unsealed Rose Ingram's tongue at last. "Do you really mean you like that book so very much?" she began, gently touching Rose Marshall's shoulder to make her look round; for she had turned her face towards the bannisters, and was gazing out at the lamps in the street, and the crowd of women gathered round the herring-seller's cart, with the same curious dreamy look in her eyes that Rose had noticed before. "Do you care for that story? Papa gave it to me, and wanted me to read it; but I did not call it a real story-book at all."

"Isn't it a true story? I thought it was. I thought there was such a Happy Valley somewhere; and I like to think of some of the princes and princesses being left there still, among all them flowers and nice things."

"But they weren't happy there, you know, they wanted to get away; and it was so very stupid of them, I can't bear to read about it. When people get into

nice fairy sort of places, they ought to be happy and stay there."

"Yes, but they don't; father did not, you know—he got tired, and came here; that was why I thought it was a true story, and liked it so much."

"But your father never was in Abyssinia, in Rasselas's valley, was he?" cried Rose Ingram, with astonished wide-open eyes.

"No; but it was a place like it, with trees and hills all round, and flowers, and a river. The others don't remember it—they was too young when we came away—but I do. Mother was always well, and father was always kind; and we had a cottage all to ourselves, with a rose-tree growing by the door—that was why mother called me Rose! Oh! and the way we went to school there! there was stiles, and Harry and I used to help Clara and Susie over them; and between the stiles it was bean-fields and corn-fields; and all summer long we brought posies in our hands to school to give to our teacher, or to Mr. and Mrs. Crawford when they came in."

"Who were Mr. and Mrs. Crawford?"

"Our parson and his wife, to be sure; everybody knew them. They lived a little way beyond the school-house. There was the pond, where the ducks swam about, and a bit of the lane that sloped up where the trees met overhead, and then you saw the parson's green garden-gate, and the big mulberry-tree on the grass-plat inside; and if one looked in through the gate, most days one saw Miss Sophia—that was the parson's daughter—lying in her wheel-chair under the tree. She was sick, and could not walk about; but she would call us to come into the garden sometimes, and talk to us; and every Sunday, after afternoon church, in summer, we sat round under

the mulberry-tree—all the school-children did, and she read a story to us; and when she had done, we each had a apple give to us, or a pear, or a bit of bread-and-jam, to take away with us, and eat in the fields going home."

"Yes, that must have been very nice; I can see all that just as if I had been there. How could your father get tired of such a place, and come here?" Rose Ingram looked all round her as she spoke. Up, through the open door into the close dirty little room behind, where all the children lay in one ragged bed; down, across the many ill-lighted flights of stone stairs to the wet, crowded, noisy street, from which at the moment a rough-looking man was turning into the house, staggering a good deal as he walked, and shouting out a verse of a song in a voice that made Rose shudder, and edge a little nearer to her namesake on the stair. "Is that him—your father?" she asked in a frightened whisper.

"Oh no, father won't be home for ever so long yet. That's Bully George, widow Jones's son. Never mind him; he's quarrelsome sometimes, but he'll be quiet soon as he knows Sister Teresa's in the house."

"Is your father a bad man like that?"

"He ain't a bit like George Jones, ain't father. The neighbours call him a bad man; but I don't think he's that bad, like some of the others. When Harry died, and mother was taken away to the hospital, he cried ever so; and once last week, when he came in the worse for drink, and Teddy would mimic him walking up-stairs and father threw a boot at him, and it hit me and cut my head, he was that sorry and that kind to me afterwards. He brought home a bag full of sweeties next day, and stayed in all the evening, and rode the children on his foot till their bed-time, and listened to me reading *Rasselas* afterwards—for he is a great scholar, is father;

and he has a good heart too, he has. One Sunday morning, last summer, when mother began to be ill, he took us all out for a walk a long way, and carried Polly and Teddy by turns out to a place where we saw fields again and gathered daisies. Poor mother was pleased when he brought us all back; and we put the daisies in water, and he stayed quiet, and had tea. She said it did her heart good—just as if we had got back to Brooklyn again!”

“Brooklyn! that was where you lived before—the happy valley? Oh! it was a pity, certainly, you ever left it. I wonder why you did?”

“Father is a very clever workman, and folks told him he’d get good wage up in London.”

“I believe that we lived in the country once, and that we had to come up to live in London because my papa is such a clever man; he was wanted to do something here. He is called Professor Ingram.”

“He’s like father, then.”

“Oh no! oh dear me, no!” cried the Red Rose, hastily and indignantly, “he’s not the least bit like; if you were to see my father, you would know. None of us children could think of mimicking him, there is nothing in him to mimic; and if we did, he would not throw a boot at us—he could never possibly think of such a thing.”

There was a little pause in the conversation: the White Rose turned her head away, and looked again for some minutes down the dim staircase to the lights in the street. When she spoke again, there was a wistful yearning look in her eyes. “Your father is always good to you, then—every day? The little uns at your house ain’t a bit afraid of him, I suppose? You must love him a deal, to be sure?”

"Ye—es," answered Rose Ingram, stammering a little. "Of course, we all love papa very dearly, and are not afraid of him exactly. He comes up into the school-room just before he dresses for dinner, and asks what tickets we have got at our classes; and if I have a *précédence* card, he pats my head; but then that's all I ever see of him. When we go down into the drawing-room after dinner, he is almost always talking to the visitors; and I don't care to come near and listen, because it's generally about astronomy or some such rubbishing thing they talk; and besides, since the Fräulein came we are expected to speak German all the evening; and, do you know, I think sometimes that having to speak French and German prevents one getting very fond of one's father and mother. One can't say what one likes to them when one is thinking of genders and terminations all the time, you know. Can one?"

Rose Marshall's experience did not furnish her with an answer to this question, and the conversation flagged till Sister Teresa's voice was heard from the storey below, calling the little girls to come downstairs. She had finished her business in the house, and Clara was now despatched to the little upper-room, to put herself to bed, and keep guard over Teddy; while Rose Marshall was instructed to carry the soup-cans and the broom back to the Home, and wait there till Mother Ursula was at liberty to give her a bottle of medicine, which she was to take to the sick man Sister Teresa had just left.

The Home was even a yet busier place at eight o'clock on a winter's evening than it had been at four. The door stood open, and there was a constant succession of people passing in and out. Most of them



were coming in now, however, and were congregating round the fireplace with the air of people who had brought a long day's work to a satisfactory conclusion. Rose Ingram, from a seat on a low bench near the fire which she hastened to take on her entrance into the reception-room, looked at them all with great interest. There were girls, very poorly clad the most of them, but clean and tidy, wearing aprons over their dresses, such as Sister Helen had given Rose, who came in bringing empty soup-tins, or materials for house-cleaning, as if they were returning from tasks that had been given them to do. These, as they settled themselves in little groups round the fire, to warm rough chapped hands, or dry the worn shoes that had not kept the rain from their feet, nodded and smiled at Rose, as much as to say, So you have got an apron too; you are one of us. How Rose wished she was really! There were a good many rough-looking young men and ragged boys in the room, too, who formed a sort of outer circle, getting the warmth of the fire, but not coming very near; some of them had little medals fastened to their button-holes; and Rose, as she looked attentively round the circle, thought that these had something different in their faces from the others. It was not that they were much cleaner, or at all better dressed, but they did not look so wild and sad and sullen as the others did. They seemed more as if they belonged to some one, and had been let in, instead of being always left outside; and Rose thought again about her fancy, that the door of the Home was like Christian's wicket-gate at the head of the way. Had it been like that, she wondered, to the rough boys, and the pale, aproned girls, and to little Rose Marshall? She could not help thinking that it had.

Sister Helen was busy putting away the flannel petticoats that had not been sold; but Mother Ursula had come to the fire-place, and was sitting on one side of it, in the little straw chair where Rose had sat before tea. Two or three of the girls had placed themselves on the floor at her feet, and she made a little sign to Rose Marshall to come and join them; and without saying a word, she lifted the sore arm, and laid it tenderly across her knee, and drew Rose's head to rest against the knee too. They were all talking together, and the coming in of the two Roses only interrupted them for a minute. Rose was rather surprised to find that Mother Ursula was telling the boys and girls about things, explaining them; and at first she thought it was the same kind of talk that her father and his friends had together, and she made up her mind not to listen to it; but by-and-by a sentence in Mother's pleasant voice caught her ear, and she found it so interesting that she could not bear to lose a word afterwards. It had evidently begun in their all talking about the fire—how pleasant and inviting it had looked from the street; and how it had seemed to draw them all in to sit together and get warm, and see the light play on each other's faces, and bring out pleasant colours there: and when Rose began to listen really, Mother Ursula had just taken up a piece of coal from the fire-box, and was saying how ugly and dark it was, how very unlike the glowing red walls of the caves in the fire-place, or the bright white flames that danced up the chimney; and yet, she said, the heat, and the light, and the beautiful colours, and the dancing motion, were all in the bit of coal, or they never could be made to come out of it. This dark, cold thing was really full of light and warmth and beauty. This was

nothing else than stored-up sunbeams. Sunbeams that had left the sun thousands and thousands and thousands of years ago, and had been safely stored up, packed away in this solid dark form for our use, till we should set them free, to rise and shine again, and make sunshine in the night and in the winter. Then Mother Ursula dropped the lump of coal into a red cave in the fire-place, and told them all to watch how soon it would begin to glow.

"Don't I wish," she said, when, after a minute or two, a jet of lovely flame burst out—"don't I wish I could do the same to some of you? don't I wish I could turn you into sunbeams? for that is what you are all meant to be. Flames springing up to God, rays of red heat, flowing out and warming each other. Ah! I don't care how black and hard and cold and separate you are now; the coals are all that, till we get them together, and put a light to them. I know that the sunbeams are in you; for are not you all God's children? and has not our Lord Jesus Christ died for you all? Now, don't you think it's a pity that some of you won't be drawn in—that you will remain by yourselves, dark, useless, defiling, instead of coming to the light of God's Love and the Fellowship of His Church, that can set you free to be what you were made to be? Don't you see that the coals must touch each other, and be drawn together close, or they can't glow? That is what Love and Fellowship in holy things does for us—it makes us glow; and while we remain separate, hating and hateful, how dark and cold and ugly and miserable we are! I wish you could see this, some of you. George, and Jim—and you, Big Ben—you have been dropping in here for a good many Saturday nights; but oh! I wish we could draw you in a little closer."

Mother Ursula had fixed her eyes on one of the

tallest and roughest looking of the lads as she said this; and Rose, who was watching closely, saw that a little fellow, very pale and timid looking, and worse dressed than any of the rest, edged up to this tall one and slipped a hand within his, while Mother spoke, and looked up—oh so wistfully and longingly!—in his face. He had a medal on. Was he the big rough boy's little brother, or little comrade in trade, perhaps?—they both had trays of match-boxes strapped round their necks—and did he wish very much that the big boy would join him in trying to be good? Oh, how Rose hoped he would get his wish! In watching this little incident, she lost something that Mother Ursula was saying about there being some coals that did not glow, but only wasted away in smoke, that dulled the flames, and went far to spoil the beauty of the fire.

A minute or two after this the clock stuck nine, and Mother Ursula got up from her chair, and the boys and girls, taking it as a signal of dismissal, began to move to the door. Aunt Rachel came in before the crowd was quite dispersed, and said that the carriage had returned, and was waiting to take them home; and Rose Ingram got into a small agony because the White Rose had disappeared with Sister Teresa, and she was dreadfully afraid she should not see her again, to wish her good-bye, and give her the bright penny for Teddy. She dived down into the bottom of her pocket, and drew out a dainty little purse that her godmother, Lady Dunallan, had given her on her last birth-day. Yes, the bright new penny was there all right, and by its side a fat five-shilling piece that Rose had kept by her a long time, and designed to spend in the purchase of a new piano for the doll's

house, on the first occasion when she could persuade her mother to take her to a certain shop in the Lowther Arcade, where report said dolls' pianos, on which veritable tunes might be played, were to be purchased.

Aunt Rachel was now taking leave of Mother Ursula and the Sisters; and as she turned to leave the fire-place, she raised her hand, and dropped something into a money-box fastened into the wall by the chimney corner. "For Rose's share of the fire to-night," she said, smiling.

"Ah!" Mother Ursula answered, "I am much obliged to you for remembering; the fire-place would often have to be cold—and a sad sight it is when it is cold, I can tell you!—if those who can afford to help did not bear it in mind. And those who can't well afford it, too!" she added; for just then the little match-boy Rose had noticed shuffled shrinkingly up to the wall, and dropped something into the box. Was it a half-penny or a farthing? Rose could not see distinctly which. Her own heart began to beat very quickly, and she looked again at her dear five-shilling piece. There would be just time to drop it in, and no one but the little ragged boy would see her; for Aunt Rachel was half-way down the room, and Mother and the Sisters had also moved away. In a great hurry she climbed on to a bench to reach the money-box and let the heavy piece of money fall in. It made a loud click as it fell, and with the sound Rose realised that it had gone quite past recall, and that she had put it out of her power to buy that little piano, if ever such a good opportunity came. A little pang shot through her mind at the thought, and she remembered what Nurse Lewis often said to her, that she always did things in a great hurry and repented afterwards. Perhaps it would

have been better to wait, and think more about this, and ask the others at home. They would think it very odd, and not like what she had done at all. As she turned away half sorrowful, her eye fell on some words written on the side of the box—"Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these My brethren, ye have done it unto Me." *Really*—had she really? Was it really the same as if He came in there on wet cold Saturday nights, and warmed His feet by the fire? and had He let her help to keep the fire up? How ridiculous it seemed to think of the little piano, or of what anyone would say, if that was true; and Rose knew in her heart that it was.

She got down from the bench, and crossed the room to join her aunt, feeling very happy indeed. No one had seen what she had done but the little match-boy, who had dropped in his gift just before hers; and perhaps Someone else—Someone Who once sat on a seat, and counted the shillings and farthings and mites as they fell into another money-box. Rose made up her mind that she would not tell anyone what she had done with her five shillings, unless mamma chanced to ask, which was not likely.

There was still the bright penny to be given away, and then the purse would be empty; and fortunately as they were going down the steps, Rose Marshall came out from the door at the end of the passage, with a phial of medicine in her hand. While Aunt Rachel was looking out for the carriage, Rose had time to slip the penny between her fingers, and whisper, "There, that's for Teddy; and tell him that if he will leave off trying to stand on his head, I will give him another penny, or perhaps, if I have it, a fourpenny piece, when I come here again. Do you think that will help

you to get him along the street to school, so that you won't have to hurt your arm again?"

"Oh yes, that it will. How kind you are! Oh! please, I don't know whatever makes you so good to me!"

"I like you," Rose whispered shyly; "I like you for being so brave and so white; and we are namesakes, you know; and I have always wished that I had a nice white face, like yours. Good-night, Rose!" And then, neither of them knew which made the first movement; but somehow the white and the pink face came close together, and the two Roses kissed each other.

Aunt Rachel was just turning round on the carriage-step to call her niece, and saw the salutation with some surprise. "My dear," she said, as they were driving off, "what made you kiss that rather dirty little girl on the steps of the Home? I can understand your feeling very kindly to everybody you meet there, and I quite approve of that; but kissing is another thing. You are apt, I know, to be a little sudden and vehement in your likings; and you had better remember that it is not advisable to kiss everybody the first time you meet."

"Everybody! Oh no! But, Auntie, that little girl is called Rose—Rose Marshall; and has she not a nice white face?"

"Well, I thought it rather dirty."

"Perhaps; but under the dirt it was as white as snow. Lady Dunallan never could call her a Lancaster Rose, could she? But what I like best about her, Aunt Rachel, is that she is so brave! She dragged her little brother this morning from under the wheels of an omnibus, and hurt her arm dreadfully, and thought nothing of it; and, Aunt Rachel, she reads

'Rasselas, Prince of Abyssinia,' to herself for fun—that dull book that papa calls a classic—and she does sums by herself out of school-hours. Oh, I do like her! I hope you will bring me here to see her again soon."

"I have heard you give worse reasons for taking to a fresh favourite, I acknowledge, Rose; but what will Lucy Fanshawe say to your setting up a new friend so suddenly? I am afraid your attachments are not of a very durable kind."

"This one will be, you shall see, Aunt Rachel. I shall think a great deal about Rose Marshall till I see her again; and I am sure I know more about her now than I did about Lucy Fanshawe when we had talked together a dozen times; for after all, Lucy never talks about anything but lessons, and dolls, and new frocks; and now that I know the names of all her dolls, and how she does her lessons, and what her last governess was like, we have not much to say to each other."

"I should have thought you would have had less to say to the little girl you kissed just now."

"But there is more to think about in her. There is a great difference, I assure you, Aunt Rachel, though I can't explain it. Auntie, did it ever strike you that the door of this house is like anything in particular?"

"You must express yourself a little more clearly before I can answer you, my dear."

"I mean the picture in our 'Pilgrim's Progress,' of the Gate at the head of the way. Don't you remember? I told you last Sunday that I often wished there was a real gate, and that I could come to it and knock, and be let in. It is so puzzling when one is told that it all means every-day things; but now, when I try to imagine the wicket-gate, and Christian knocking, and



the Shining One letting him in, I shall always just this little half-door, and the poor children looking and Sister Helen stepping down to open for them."

"So long as you don't lose the real meaning of allegory in your fanciful picture, my dear, there is objection to your thinking of it as you please."

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### CHAPTER III.

#### LOOKING OUT OF SELF.

"LIKE the mother's bag, in the 'Swiss Family Robinson' you mean, Rosie, don't you?"

"Not exactly. I always fancied that a big thing like a sack, or a pillow-case, for, if you remember, the Swiss mother threw it over the side of the ship into the boat. Ours must be what we could carry ourselves and it must look nice enough for mamma and Aunt Rachel to let us take it in the carriage, or how are we ever to get it to the Home? Yet it must be large enough to hold all sorts of toys and things. I wish I had asked Clara to tell me more particularly what the other young lady's bag was like."

"You'll have to buy a bag on purpose, Rose: one of those black leather things would do, such as Nurse Lewis always carries when we go out of town, with the buns and sandwiches for the journey. I dare say you could get one at the Lowther Arcade, for one-and-sixpence—and oh, this is the good news I was going to tell you when the Fräulein stopped our talk before Lucy Fanshawe told me on Saturday that she had been to the shop with her gradmamma, and asked the pr-

of the little piano—and it is only three-and-sixpence, so you will just have eighteen pence of your five shillings left to do as you like with, and I advise you to spend it in buying a bag. You are so untidy, you know, Rosie, that even if you do collect toys and presents for those poor children, as you say you shall, you will lose them all, or let them get broken, before you have an opportunity of taking them to the Home, unless you have a place on purpose to keep them in.”

“Oh no, I shall not,” Rose answered quickly; “it would be ridiculous to waste our money in buying the bag till we’ve got something ready to put in it.”

“Ah, to be sure, I forgot that. Well, at the Lowther Arcade you can buy a quantity of such toys as would suit poor children, for eighteen pence—Lucy Fanshawe says so.”

“I know I can; but I don’t mean to buy toys with that eighteen pence.”

“What eighteen pence?”

“The eighteen pence I should have had left of my five shillings, if I had bought the little piano.”

“It’s the only eighteen pence you will have to spend for a long time to come, for you know your weekly money generally goes in forfeits; and oh, Rosie, why do you say *if* about buying the little piano? You are surely not going to change your mind about that? We all want it particularly; and Lucy Fanshawe said on Saturday that if you would get it before Lilly’s birthday, when we have a whole holiday, she would come and bring her dolls, and pretend to be Professor Gosse giving them lessons on the piano. She is so funny over the dolls’ music lessons, you should see her. We nearly died of laughing at her house, on Saturday evening.”

“I wonder Lucy Fanshawe can spend so much time

playing with dolls. I think it really is very silly at her age. I wish I had never given in to it to please her."

"Oh Rosie!"

There was a general groan of disapproval from a group of younger sisters, respectively named Maggie, Florence, and Lilly, who were now standing round Rose Ingram, before the school-room book-case, to which they had all been sent to collect their books for their morning lessons. Maggie, who was only a year younger than Rose, gave expression to the general opinion. "It's too bad of you, Rose, I must say, if you are going to take against Lucy Fanshawe, and tire of playing with dolls, just when we've all spent our five shillings in putting the dolls' house in order, so that now it wants nothing to make it complete, but the little piano you promised to buy. You know it was you yourself who took a fancy to Lucy Fanshawe, and you agreed with her that we should begin to play with our dolls again. It will be a shame to go back, when we have all spent our money. You are always taking things into your head, and then changing; you persuaded us to give up everything for the white mice and the silkworms—and now that they are all dead, and we have got to care about our dolls again, you should let us go on."

"You can go on, if you like."

"Oh, but you know it's never any fun to play without you—and Lucy Fanshawe is your own particular friend."

"She likes you, Maggie, and Florence too, quite as well as she likes me; and I am sure I shall not mind if either of you take her for your particular friend now."

"I do call that shameful to Lucy. I wonder how you can behave so, Rosie. I know the Fräulein would

say you had a cold heart, to talk like that of giving up your particular friend!"

"I have not a cold heart, however."

"It's mean of you to go back from your promise about buying the piano, any way," struck in Florence Ingram, who never had any scruple against expressing herself forcibly; "we've all bought what we agreed to buy with our money, and you *must* do the same, or I shall tell the boys how shabby and shifty you are. You've no right to break your promise to us, because you've taken it into your head to be kind to poor children. I am sure mamma would say so!"

"It was not a promise," cried Rose, raising her voice, and turning all at once from a cabbage to a crimson rose; "and it's all of you that are shabby and shifty. I had a sovereign of my own—Lady Dunallan gave it me in my little velvet purse on my birth-day, and I divided it amongst us all; and you have done what you like with your five shillings, and now you begrudge my spending mine as I please. I am sure anyone would say that was the shabbiness."

This allusion to the sovereign's antecedents, which they had all forgotten, staggered the malcontents considerably, and brought Maggie and Lilly back to their usual allegiance to Rose; but Florence was not so easily put down. She thought for a moment, and then burst forth again, "Yes, you gave us the money, but you told us exactly how you wanted us to spend it. It was all done to please Lucy Fanshawe, because she said we ought to re-furnish the dolls' house. If I had done what I liked with my five shillings, I should have bought a paint-box; and it will be mean of you if you keep back your share, and make all our spending of no use."

"Of no use, as if doing without one little thing would spoil the whole dolls' house!"

"Lucy Fanshawe said it would be nothing without a piano. She won't come to play with us, if we have not that, I know."

"Then she'll be very silly, and I shall tell her so. It would be as bad as Aladdin's wife, who lost her palace because she would not live in it without a roc's egg. I shall tell her so."

"Rose always seems to think that one ought to be quite satisfied, if she finds out that the thing one is talking about is like something in a book; but I never can see that it makes any difference," persisted Florence, turning to the other little girls; "and I am sure Lucy Fanshawe won't. She'll say what is true—that Rose can get the piano any day for three-and-sixpence, in the Lowther Arcade. So what is the use of calling it a roc's egg? We all know she has got five shillings now in her little velvet purse. I declare I believe she goes on keeping that money, because she likes to be always promising to buy things with it and never buying them!"

Rose's face crimsoned again; there was a little truth in the observation, for she had made a great many promises respecting the spending of that five shillings, and had stretched out its capabilities in imagination a great deal further than they could possibly go. To have this remarked upon did make her very angry. "You are a horrid child, Florence," she said, "a horrid, spiteful child! and the next time you ask me to do anything for you, or to give you anything, now mind, the very next time, if you ask me ever so, I won't do it. You shall see that I won't."

"Young ladies, young ladies, what is this I hear?

*English* at nine o'clock in the morning, when you know you ought to be silent, or talking German? Get your books, and come to your seats at once; you have been a great deal longer at the book-shelf than necessary.—Rose, the mark for talking English is yours. I heard your voice loudest of all. It is really a disgrace to you, at your age, that you should set an example of disobedience, if you are left to yourself for a quarter of an hour.”

The Fräulein looked up, as she spoke, from a thin foreign letter, that had been put into her hand the minute before she desired the children to fetch their books, and which had so absorbed her attention as to prevent her overhearing their conversation till now. She look worried and unhappy, as, during the last few weeks, she always looked after reading letters from her home; and her voice had a complaining tone in it, that unfortunately always made Rose cross. She knew she ought to be sorry for having called forth this tone in a person so placid-tempered and kind as Fräulein von Bohlen, whose fault it certainly was not that her native language had more genders and cases than was convenient for those who had to learn it; but Rose would not let herself feel sorry, and so she was cross. She came up to the table where the Fräulein was seated, and held out her German exercise-book, without speaking a word; and when her morning's task had been pointed out to her, she threw herself into her seat at the end of the table, and drew the ink-stand towards her, and began to pull about the pens, all with the pert indifferent air that Maggie and Lilly understood as a signal for a morning of being tiresome. Florence had a more independent spirit, and preferred to stand out in contrast to the others in her bad and good times.

She secured the best pen while Rose was trying the quality of the feathery ends of all the others on her nose ; and set to work with such ostentatious diligence, that the Fräulein was moved to remark upon it in German, and confess her surprise that Rose should allow herself to stand in need of a good example from a child two years younger than herself. "Indeed, she must say that it would be better for the schoolroom work, if Florence were the eldest sister instead of Rose."

Florence, though she had only been learning the language a few months, understood German well enough to appreciate this remark fully, and to look across the table at Rose, with an expression of triumph in her sharp little grey eyes. "There now—you see I'm right! Am not I always telling you that I could manage better than you, if you would let me, and that I ought to take the eldest's place?" the grey eyes said, as plainly as possible. Lilly whispered to Maggie that she should be sorry indeed if Florence were the eldest sister; and this little tribute was soothing to Rose's feelings, yet the Fräulein's speech was very provoking. If Florence had been a pleasant-tempered child, her being praised above everyone else would not have mattered; but when she was by nature only too fussy and forward, and when all the quarrels with the boys originated from her bumptiousness, it *was* too bad of the Fräulein to be always setting her up, and making her think still more of herself, just because she had a stupid knack of catching up German words and phrases that other people had not. It was grievance enough, Rose thought, to make one wish oneself anyone but what one was. Yes, even a ragged child, who often had to go without breakfast or dinner, and whose

father beat her occasionally. It would be a great deal more interesting. And Rose, who had spent about five minutes in dipping her pen into the ink, turned to her copy-book ; and instead of writing the first word of her exercise, began to amuse herself by drawing a little picture on the top of the page—an open door, and a flight of steep steps, and a bare-headed figure at the bottom—and as she worked away, her thoughts were busy shaping out an untried life for herself. Sensible sort of lessons, such as she was sure the Sisters would give—a good many sums, perhaps,—Rose did not altogether dislike arithmetic—and reading, and singing hymns—nothing worse ; and then, when the lesson-hours were over, all the honour and glory of managing a house, or at all events a room, oneself. As it was, there was not one single thing in her surroundings that she could manage just exactly as she liked—not even her bird, or her kitten, or her own particular shelf in the play-room toy cupboard. Here there recurred to Rose's mind various subjects of standing dispute between herself and Nurse Lewis, and Packer the man-servant, who equally set their faces against the introduction of pets—say it was only a dormouse, or a caterpillar—into any corner, even the most remote, of the house. Ah ! it would be delicious to have a room to do as one liked in, inhabited only by younger brothers and sisters, and by a father who went out before one was up, and did not come back till nearly bed-time. It would be almost as good as a desert island with the "Young Islanders." Rose did not think she would let her domain fall into dirt and disorder, as her namesake had done. She saw herself every morning bustling about, sweeping, dusting, arranging, as Sister Teresa had done, only better ; for one's own taste and invention would come in, and



even with a few poor things there might be contrivances. Besides, one need not "make out" that one continued to be so very poor; if the room were kept in very beautiful order, the father would leave off getting tipsy, and throwing boots at the children (at least, story-books about poor people always said it was so), he would bring home all his wages on Saturday night, and give them to his clever managing little daughter; and she would go out by gaslight, with a big basket and an umbrella, and buy things. How interesting it must be to spend money on real useful things, such as grown-up people buy, and to do just as you liked with your purchases when you got home! There would be a great deal of talk in the Model Lodging Houses about the improvement the clever little girl was making in the little upstairs suite of rooms. The untidy women, with drunken sons or husbands, who lived downstairs, would come to look, and perhaps take example, and reform their rooms and husbands. The Sisters and Mother Ursula would be quite astonished at the change for the better they would find in the house, when they came in to help on Saturday night; and would not they make much of the Rose who had worked such wonders? Then, when the mother came back cured from the hospital, and saw the new furniture, and the children in their tidy clothes, and the father who never got tipsy any more (it should all be a surprise to her), how happy she would be! How dearly she would love the little daughter who had made the home pleasant all by herself; and what a lovely story-book evening they would have all together! If one could do such things as that for one's parents, it would be worth while to work hard, and try to be very good; so different from

being told to please them by learning stupid lessons, that one can't believe will ever be of the least use to them. Oh, how could Rose Marshall care to waste her time dreaming about Rasselas and the Happy Valley, and things that were not really half as interesting, or as storylike even, as the life she might lead herself? She need not build castles in the air; her sort of life was, not a castle, perhaps, but a story that one might really live in, if one liked, and make so interesting!

Just then a bit of coal fell out of the fire, with the startling noise that falling coals do make in a still room; and Rose woke from her dream, and looked up. Florence had turned one leaf in her exercise-book, and was half-way down another. Lilly was leaning back in her chair, sucking her tongue, and twisting a particular curl round her finger, already half asleep. Maggie was building a gipsies' tent with her atlas and dictionary, and had just succeeded in hanging the beaded penwiper as a kettle under a tripod of pens. The Fräulein, believing them all to be satisfactorily occupied, had taken out her thin letter again, and was re-reading the last page—re-reading, and crying over it; yes, at the moment Rose glanced at her, she saw a tear creep from under her spectacles, wander down the side of her nose, and fall in a great blot on the paper. She turned away her head directly, and hoped that none of the others would look, or disturb the Fräulein, just then. She wished they had all been working diligently, so that when the Fräulein wiped her eyes, and put away her letter, she need not begin directly to find fault; for Rose had a warm tender little heart, in spite of all her faults, and the sight of any sort of pain always moved her. Of course it would make the Fräulein feel worse, whatever her trouble was, if she found they had all

taken advantage of her absence of mind to behave as they ought not. Rose made a very long leg under the table, and touched first Maggie, and then Lilly; and when she had attracted their attention, made up the sort of face which they understood was meant to tell them they were to set to work, and not be stupid any more. Rose had a peculiarly happy knack of making up faces, which enabled her to convey even unwelcome suggestions, such as setting to work, in a facetious manner, that disposed the younger ones to take them in good part. When she looked down at her own exercise-book again, there was the little picture staring her in the face. It was something between a copy of the illustration and a real sketch of the entrance to the Home, and brought the "gate at the head of the way" very forcibly to Rose's mind. It did not set her off dreaming again; but while she was opening her dictionary to look out a word, she thought of the reception-room fire, and of what Mother Ursula had said about *glowing*. "Flames springing up to God—rays of red heat flowing out and warming each other—that is what you are all meant to be!" Quarrelling could not be being that. Idling could not be being that. And since we have all sunbeams in us, and are all meant to glow, Rose supposed one could do it even at lessons, if it were only in the poor negative sort of way, of not making sorrowful people's troubles worse, and worrying sore hearts sorer. It was not so nice as doing real work for other people, and getting a great deal of credit for it; but it might be a step in the way; at all events, now it had come into one's mind, one must just do it. A great deal of time had been lost; and after all, Rose's exercise was not very well done at the end of the morning. Florence had twice as many marks as

anybody else : and the Fräulein said again that she was most fitted to be the eldest sister, and that she wished Maggie and Lilly would take example from her, instead of from Rose.

Things don't right themselves all in a minute, when one begins wrong. Yet Rose went up-stairs to get ready for her walk in an unusually sunny temper of mind. She had just let Florence appropriate the best pointed piece of slate-pencil, though she knew that having it would give her at least five minutes' start of her at the arithmetic class they were going to in the afternoon ; and she had stayed behind in the school-room, and lost the first turn of being dressed for the walk, to rescue the Fräulein's knitting from the kitten, and put the tangled skein to rights—just after the Fräulein had scolded her. Two things not worth thinking of for a moment, and Rose did not think of them ; yet somehow the doing of them had brought a glow into her heart that lasted all through her walk, and through the arithmetic lesson, where, to her surprise, for she interrupted herself once or twice to help Lilly, she gained the head of the class—and which helped her to a little victory that came quite at the end of the evening, and put a crown upon the day. Yes, a crown, though it involved the giving up something she cared a good deal about, and a rather sharp pang had gone before.

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## CHAPTER IV.

## TWO REAL KISSES.

ALL the children, that is to say, the five elder ones, Claude, Lionel, Rose, Maggie, and Florence, assembled in the drawing-room after tea, where they usually spent the last two hours of the evening ostensibly with their parents, though it often enough happened that bedtime came before more than a word or two had been exchanged between the father and mother and the children.

Mrs. Ingram was very tired that evening, and was resting on the sofa, till the Professor, with some friends who had dined at the house, should come into the drawing-room. She had had all the gas-burners but one at the far end of the room lowered; and when the children appeared, she told them to take their books and work to a distance, near the light, and amuse themselves quietly for half an hour. There was a good deal of noisy running backwards and forwards among the children, to collect what they wanted for their evening's amusement, before the quiet could begin.

Rose alone stayed in the drawing-room, and occupied herself in covering mamma's feet with a rug, and fetching a second cushion for her head. It was not nearly so good, to be sure, as giving one's mother an orange that she could not have bought for herself; but it won Rose a surprised look and a gentle warm kiss from Mrs. Ingram, that made it quite worth while to sit for half an hour afterwards, with nothing by way of

entertainment but the pictures in 'Pilgrim's Progress' to look at over again.

Mrs. Ingram was a gentle, reserved woman, generally ailing, and not able to take any active part in the management of her household; and she had acquiesced in the notion instilled into her by other people, that after her children left the nursery, their time must be given up exclusively to learning, so as to leave nothing for her. Thus a habit of estrangement had grown up; and it had actually become a matter of surprise to her, to receive from one of the school-room children such a little uncalled-for service as Rose had rendered to-night. Before she composed herself to sleep, Mrs. Ingram looked after Rose walking down the room, and thought with pleasure how tall she was growing, and that perhaps the many painful days when in the great busy house she felt lonely and neglected, might come to an end by-and-by; and when all the fuss and bother of the learning was over, she might begin to get some happiness out of her children for herself. Rose's kiss on her hot aching forehead had felt very sweet; to be tended hereafter by Rose was something to look forward to; and she went to sleep with more cheerful thoughts in her mind than she had known for a long time—not very different thoughts, perhaps, from those that had sweetened Mrs. Marshall's orange, eaten in a hospital bed, with her ragged little daughter watching each mouthful as it went down. Mothers' hearts are the same, let what circumstances will surround them.

Florence had been the first to get back to the drawing-room, when the others scattered to collect their evening's amusements; and she had seized the most desirable place at the far table, just under the gas-burner, which was not allowed to be turned up far

enough to give a very available light; and at that end of the table least cumbered with knick-knacks. There she had secured a convenient place for herself; the large card she was illuminating, and her two precious saucers of gold and silver leaf, bought last Saturday with her weekly money, which was never in Florence's case diminished by fines. Claude came next, and shrugged his shoulders in disgust, when he saw Florence's arrangements. Then he settled himself in the next best place, put his elbows on the table, thrust his fingers through his hair, opened 'Feats on the Fiord,' and in two minutes had gone off to Norway, and was rowing down to Vögel Island with Rolf, so entirely absorbed in his book, that it would take a pretty loud noise, or a box on the ear, to drag him back out of it. Clearly he was not to be reckoned on as an ally in the task of keeping the children quiet while mamma slept—that is to say, not when he had a new book on hand.

Maggie brought her bead-work as close under the light as Florence's drawing-board would allow her to get it; and last came Lionel, who always was last at work or play, with a heap of lesson-books under his arm, though it was well enough known that mamma did not like lesson-books to be brought into the drawing-room at night. Rose had taken the seat at the table furthest from the light; she had only brought 'Pilgrim's Progress' with her by way of amusement; and as she knew the illustrations almost by heart, she did not mind for once sitting nearly in the dark. She beckoned to Lionel to come next to her, whispering by way of bribe, "I will help you to look out words, I can see well enough for that."

Instead of answering, he stood still and growled,

"Claude, just look what those girls have done—taken the best places for themselves, and filled the table with their trumpery rubbish, so that there's no room for us! Oh, I say!"

"It's no use, Lionel—Claude won't hear unless you shout loud enough to wake mamma. It's rather dark at this end of the table, to be sure; but if you'll come here quietly, I'll help you with your work."

"A great deal of use your help will be in doing Greek!—Come, Maggie, move round to the other side, and give me your place at once. What does your work signify? I was downstairs with Packer before tea, hunting a rat that had got into the cellar, and I've all my lessons to do for to-morrow. I must get to the light!"

It was not fair. Maggie was working at a bead pin-cushion she wanted particularly to finish by Lilly's birth-day; and Lionel ought not to have gone with Packer, or to be doing his lessons after tea; but as Claude said nothing, Rose could not interfere. She was very sorry, and it provoked her a good deal to see how complacently Florence went on dipping her brush into her saucers of gold and silver leaf, and painting her letters, just as if she were not the youngest in the room, and only kept her place because everyone knew she would not suffer herself to be dislodged quietly; and a commotion of her creating in the drawing-room, while their mother was resting, had once brought the Professor from his study, with consequences to the boys that no one liked to remember. Even with this danger hanging over them, Lionel's aggravation at Florence's *cheek* in taking the best place, would not let him keep quiet. A dumb-show quarrel went on between those two all the evening; Lionel pushing his books closer



and closer under the lamp, and Flory watching opportunities when his head was buried in a dictionary, to shove them back, or drop grammar or exercise-book on to the floor, so as to give him the trouble of searching for them when he wanted them again.

"It's too bad!" Lionel burst out at last. "Claude, it's a shame to stand it; I declare I won't much longer; a child like that to shove herself into the best place, and presume to play tricks on me. Won't I serve her out some day, soon!"

"No, you won't!" said Florence, sharply, "because you daren't. Claude would not let you; and if he did, I'd go to papa."

"Oh Florence!" cried Maggie, "how nasty of you to say that! I would not be a tell-tale for anything in the world!"

"And I won't, unless they bully; and then I shall, of course."

"But it's your fault! You *have* no right to take the best place from Lionel; he's older than you. We ought to give up to the boys."

"No, we ought not. They ought to give up to us, because they're the older and stronger: I'm sure I'm right about that, because I heard it in church."

Claude, who happened to be just at that moment turning a leaf, looked up suddenly. "Oh, come, I say, you had better not repeat what you heard in church, when you're quarrelling, anyhow."

His head was down over his book again before there was time for an answer; but Rose took advantage of the interruption to strike in with, "We're all talking English, and it's the day for speaking German!"

"Bother the German!" said Lionel. "What have we to do with your stupid school-room rules?"

"Papa said he wished you to speak German three evenings in the week."

"Wished! He'll have to wait a long time before such reasonable wishes as that are gratified!"

Claude looked up again, to growl out, "Can't you hold your tongue?" and there was an interval of quiet, broken, however, before long, by a loud crash.

Lionel and Florence reduced to silence, had betaken themselves to a noiseless struggle, each trying to draw the table from the other, by twisting their feet round the centre pole, and pulling. A too successful twist on Lionel's part lifted the table so far on his side, that the chief part of its contents, including Florence's saucers, glided with a loud crash on to the floor. Of course Mrs. Ingram sprang up at the noise, wide awake, and a good deal flurried at being roused so suddenly from her nap. When she had ascertained the cause of the disturbance, she did not scold the children—she never scolded—but she complained of them. She had been out shopping all day, she said, buying things wanted for the school-room and the nursery; and she did think it hard that she could not rest in peace a single half-hour in the same room with her children—especially when two of them were of such an age as Claude and Rose, who surely might have a little consideration for her comfort and care for her health. It did not encourage her to have the children more with her, as she often longed to do, and would certainly do, if she could see a little more thought and trustworthiness in any one of them.

Mrs. Ingram looked at Rose as she finished her speech; and Rose felt as if the words gave a sharp prick to her heart. Mamma's complainings had not hitherto given her pain. She had put them away

from her, by saying to herself that she hated people to make a fuss; but to-day she heard them with fresh ears; and the discomfort they caused her, disposed her to feel very sore and angry against Florence, who had brought the reproof upon her. Eager words of self-justification sprang to her lips. It was not her fault. She must make mamma understand that, at all events. Then something seemed to check her. She saw that her mother was frowning with the pain of a severe head-ache; and she remembered that it certainly would not lessen her suffering if she had to listen to a long explanation, and judge the question of who was most to blame between herself and Florence; who, everybody knew, was a little bit mamma's favourite, from her having had a long illness when she was a baby. If Florence would only speak herself; but no. she was picking up the pieces of her broken saucers, and crying over them, quite occupied with that. It was, perhaps, not harder for her to hold her tongue, than it had been for her namesake to refrain from mentioning Teddy, when she was looking up into Mother Ursula's face on Saturday night.

Rose pressed her lips together hard, and turning away, began to pick up the scattered books and knick-knacks, and re-arrange the table; divining rightly, that nothing would so help to soothe her mother's nervous agitation, as having everything set to rights before papa came in and asked questions that might bring the boys into disgrace for want of consideration to her.

The rest of the evening passed like any other company-evening. Mamma sat back among the sofa-cushions, looking pale and tired; and papa and his friends talked together. A word or two of their con-

versation now and then reached Rose. "Coal fields," "fossil markings in the coal," "experiments on burning diamonds." She wished she could get nearer, and discover whether anything was being said that fitted in with Mother Ursula's little parable. By-and-by, one of the gentlemen approached the sofa, and in the course of conversation with Mrs. Ingram, let fall a word or two that confirmed Rose's new idea, that grown-up people's conversation was occasionally worth listening to. Mrs. Ingram asked after this gentleman's daughter; and Rose learned, from his reply, that she was a girl about her own age, and lame.

"Don't you find it a great inconvenience for your daughter being so far from the parks?" Mrs. Ingram asked again.

"Not at all!" the gentleman answered. Walking is such an effort to my poor child now, that she never cares to go anywhere but to visit a children's hospital, a few streets distant from where we now live. Since her illness, she has spent all her spare time in making clothes and dressing dolls for the little invalids there; and the pleasure of carrying them there herself is the one inducement strong enough to overcome her dislike to going out. I consider the neighbourhood of this hospital an advantage to my poor Jessie that outweighs all other considerations."

Might not this Jessie be "the other young lady with the bag"? Rose hoped the conversation would be kept up till she had made out something further; but an interruption came, and she could only make up her mind that henceforth she would always in her own mind distinguish this gentleman from the other visitors to the house. She would call him the father of the "young lady with the bag," and take every opportunity

of standing near him, and listening to him while he talked, for the chance of hearing more about the lame daughter, with whom she felt a sort of comradeship already. Something of this good-will must have shone in her face when she came up at the end of the evening to wish him good-night; for instead of merely shaking hands as usual, he held her fingers for a few minutes, and asked her a few questions.

"Twelve and a half, are you, my dear?" he said. "I have a little girl of thirteen; but she is not nearly so tall as you. I wonder whether I can persuade your mother to spare you, some day, to come and spend an afternoon with her. I think you are the sort of little friend she would like."

It certainly was a Lancaster Rose, glowing and beaming with joy, that said in an eager voice, "Oh, thank you! thank you! I should so like to come;" and when she had turned away, the gentleman strolled up to Professor Ingram.

"What a sweet little daughter that is of yours, Ingram. I must have seen her before, I suppose; but I never noticed her particularly till to-night. What an uncommonly intelligent pleasant face she has! I must ask you to lend her to me for a few hours some day, to introduce her to my poor child; she is just the sort of companion I should like for her."

The speaker was a literary man of very high repute, for whose opinion Professor Ingram had great reverence. He was decidedly pleased that his daughter Rose should have impressed him so favourably. He called Rose back just as she was leaving the room.

"Come here, Rose; Dr. Daubeney is doing you the honour of asking you to come and see him some day. There are a great many people, older than you, who

would give a great deal for such an invitation, I can tell you."

"But I have a better inducement than that," said Dr. Daubeny. "I want to introduce your Rose to my little daughter, and to my big microscope.—Do you care for such things, my dear? would you like to see a rotifer?"

"She does not know what you are talking of, poor child! she is a sad little ignoramus, I am afraid, though her education costs me a little fortune; and she is kept so hard at work, that she never has time to take a walk with her father, or sit by her mother's bed-side when she has a headache. I often wish I had time to take my daughter's education in hand myself. So far, at least, as the laying a foundation for an intelligent interest in science goes."

"I should advise you to do so most strongly," was the answer. "You would reap an ample reward for such an outlay of time *here*, I should say;" and Dr. Daubeny put a finger on Rose's forehead.

"What do you say, Rose? can you find time for another professor among all your teachers, do you think?"

"Oh, papa!"

Between puzzlement, awe, and pleasure, Rose could say no more, but stood looking up with earnest bright eyes into her father's face.

"Well, run off to bed now, my dear; your sisters have gone long since. We'll see what time will bring. We shall astonish the Fräulein, some day, I expect;" and Professor Ingram stooped and kissed Rose's cheek—not absently, as if he did not know which of the children was before him, as was his usual way of kissing, but really as if he was pleased with her, and was think-

ing of her herself. It certainly had been a delightful evening, though she had had no story-book, and Flory had been unusually tiresome; two real kisses from papa and mamma!

Florence was very doleful over the loss of her gold and silver saucers, while the little girls were being put to bed; and she recurred several times to Rose's injustice in having induced her to spend her five shillings in dolls' house furniture, when the only thing in the world she really cared for was a good paint-box.

"Why don't you ask Rose to lend you her illuminating-box? I dare say she would let you have enough gold leaf to finish your picture," said Maggie.

"No, she would not; she said she would not do the next thing I asked of her, if I begged ever so, and I hate begging," Flory answered sullenly.

Rose had knelt down by this time to say her prayers, and was vexed with the others for going on talking. She really wanted very much that day to think of what she was saying. When she had come to the end of the usual form of words, she knelt on in the dark corner of the room a few minutes longer, for she wanted to think. There seemed more than usual to think of to-night—more pleasant things to be thankful for; yet the day had only been a common one, and had brought no special success or treat. How was it? It seemed to Rose as if a great many little windows had been opened in her mind, through which she could look at interesting things and people she had not known of before; and that from these a new light came in on all her occupations, and made them pleasanter. The Marshalls, their wants, and her hopes of supplying them—the other young lady with the bag—the new thoughts about the

Fräulein, and mamma and papa, that made her seem to have got nearer to them and love them better. Ah, how pleasant it was! It was like what Mother Ursula had said, about drawing close to people, and feeling the love and the warmth that is to make us glow. But it ought to be nearer to *every* one; no part of the fire ought to be left cold, or it would chill all the rest. The sort of love Mother Ursula spoke of was different from the kind that flowed out only to pleasant people, and when they were kind to you. A loud sob from the bed to which Florence had betaken herself after hurried prayers, reached Rose's ears. Florence was such a sullen child; and when she was once put out, did brood so over things. She would sob herself to sleep now, thinking over her fancied wrongs about the paint-box; and for days and days to come, she would keep aloof from all the children, and silently follow her own devices. The others could do well enough without her; but every one of these sulky fits left Florence more standing by herself, and strengthened the habit of regarding her as a disagreeable intruder, when she did wish to take part in anything. How could she be warm, left out like that? how could she help spoiling the fire, by being dark defiling smoke instead of flame? A purpose awoke in Rose's mind with these thoughts; but it was not a very agreeable one, and at first she tried to put it away. No, it surely could not be necessary to do that; it would be like rewarding Florence for her ill-nature; and, besides, it would be *such* a great sacrifice, and loss to herself. Of all her possessions, she really did care so much the most for that one. Ah! but should one only take the pleasure of loving—the warmth, and the light? must there not be pain too, if it really was getting into the way? must there not be



some struggles—something of the cross, to make it real?

Rose knelt a little while longer; and when she rose from her knees, went and sat down on the edge of Florence's bed.

"I have something to tell you, Florence," she said. "Do you know I really do begin to think it was too bad of me to make you spend your five shillings on dolls' furniture, when you wanted a paint-box. I can't give you another five shillings to spend; because, even when I do get more money of my own, I expect I shall want it all for the hospital bag; but I'll do this—I'll give you the illuminating box I had at Christmas for your own. I have used it very little, you know; the gold and silver saucers have much more in them than those you broke to-night."

Florence sprang up in bed. "Rose, you must be joking; that beauty? Oh no; you don't really mean to give it me for my own!"

"Yes, I do; it is yours now. I'll put it on your shelf in the toy-cupboard before breakfast to-morrow morning."

"But *why* do you give it to me?" And even by the dim light of the nursery night-lamp, Rose saw a curious, questioning, eager look come into Florence's grey eyes.

"Why—I don't know exactly; to please you, Flory, for one thing!"

"It's awfully odd of you," said Florence, slowly, "to give away the very best thing you have to me just to-night, when I know I've been making myself hateful to everybody all day. It's awfully odd, Rose, but it's awfully jolly too. I say, Rose, I'll never let the Fräulein say again that I am fitter to be

the eldest than you are; for if it's true what I heard about being "elder and chief" in the sermon on Sunday, you are a great deal more like that than I am."

"I should think it must be true, if you heard it in church."

"But when I wished to be eldest and first, I did not mean being the one 'to serve,' as the clergyman said."

"Good-night, dear. Here's nurse coming to see if we are asleep."

Nurse Lewis carried off the night-lamp, with injunctions to the little girls to go to sleep at once; but there was a streak of moonlight in the room, and by that light Rose saw Florence get up quietly, and kneel down again by the side of her bed. She must have gabbled over her prayers very quickly before, for she had hardly knelt three minutes; but now that the cloud of ill-humour was removed from her mind, she felt she could not go to sleep so; for Florence, though a disagreeable, was at the bottom a conscientious child, and thought a great deal more about right and wrong, and took a more intelligent interest in the religious instructions given to them, than did most of the other children of the family. Rose turned her face to the opposite wall, not to seem to watch Florence; but she was very glad to see what she was doing. That was the crown of joy that came to her at the end of an uneventful day. A very little cross had won it; but the cross and the crown were precious in the sight of Him who had sent them to her, and were earnest of greater things.

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## CHAPTER V.

## A BIRTH-DAY MORNING.

THERE are a great many ups-and-downs in the way, even when the feet do not stray far from it, but are enabled to keep a tolerably even course; and Rose Ingram did not fail to experience this. It was not always that her efforts to make things go well in the school-room, and to keep the peace among the brothers and sisters, answered. She made mistakes, and was really meddlesome sometimes; and sometimes those who were in the wrong, and hated even the gentlest pulling towards the right side, called her meddlesome unjustly. Yet on the whole there was improvement in the state of things in the Ingram school-room and play-room.

The grown-up people, whose concern it was, felt a sensible lessening of anxiety, and a degree of comfort in their work they had not experienced before. They did not perceive from what quarter the new influence came, and would have been much surprised if anyone had attributed it to Rose, who kept more in the background than formerly; but the children's Guardian Angels, who were rejoicing over the change, saw and noted all the little efforts that one child in that group of children was making, at work and play—the smiles that cost an effort, the soft words that sometimes seemed to provoke rather than turn away wrath—and they knew that not one was really lost. They saw how, day by day, alike from successes and failures, golden links were being woven, fibres of attraction thrown out, that

were drawing those who would yield to them ever a little higher and a little higher, and were not without some effect even on the resisting ones.

The Ingram school-room was a great place for reigning fashions, and was always pervaded by some particular rage. Sometimes it was a general attraction that took in girls and boys; and this, though bad on the whole for steady attention to lessons, was good for harmony, and constituted what Rose and Maggie called good times. There had been a long good time during the autumn, stretching from the return of the family from Lowestoft in September till the Christmas holidays, when the prevailing fashion had been the study of natural history, under the guise of keeping, in odd holes and corners of the house, the various pet animals that had been collected during the country holiday. All the old masculine and feminine feuds and disputes about the relative value of treasures appeared likely to die out under this absorbing community of interest, and a commonwealth was created by a surrender of property on all sides. The dolls' house had been, with great public spirit, given up by the ladies to be converted into a gymnasium for a public school of white mice; and the dolls—even the waxen beauties, with real hair and elaborate toilettes—had been banished to the highest shelf of the toy-cupboard, and turned with their faces to the wall, while their pink-lined cradles and their handsome four-post bed were turned into sleeping and hiding-places for a hedgehog, three dormice, and a hopelessly lame tortoise-shell kitten. Not to be behindhand in generosity, Claude turned out a collection of minerals he had once taken pride in, to make room for a large family of hairy caterpillars, and a blind

worm, who was expected to drink milk and develop into a wonder of intelligence and devotion; while Lionel, who had nothing special of his own to give up, kept a colony of sticklebacks in a foot-bath under his bed, and a toad (conjectured to be a thousand years old, and to have seen the Little Duke and Richard Cœur de Lion) in an old water-jug. All the weekly money that did not go in fines for unpunctuality at meals and classes, was deposited in a public treasury, and expended in the maintenance of the live treasures; and the greatest unanimity and devotion prevailed among their guardians, till the approach of the Christmas holidays introduced a disturbing interest into their minds, and led to a relaxation of care and precautions. The pets were no longer strictly confined to their proper haunts, and began to make themselves obnoxious to the higher powers. The Fräulein found a little fish one morning in the school-room sugar-basin, and was laid up for the rest of the day with nervous headache. One of the white mice broke its leg in the gymnasium, was invalided in Lionel's charge, and finally sent to the wash in his trousers-pocket, to the great discomfiture and horror of the laundress. Baby caught sight of the blind-worm poking out its flat head from within Claude's waistcoat, and kept nurse awake all the next night by screaming out that serpents were biting her. At last, by way of climax, in one day nurse traced, or thought she traced, a disagreeable odour (enough to give everyone in the house scarlet-fever) to the cradle, where the dormice had rolled themselves up for their winter's sleep; and Packer, the factotum down-stairs, had his equanimity disturbed in the middle of a large dinner-party by drawing the hedgehog instead of a gravy-spoon out of the plate-

basket. From that moment the fate of the pets was sealed, for the head powers of back-stairs regions were agreed in determining their destruction. Nurse awoke Mrs. Ingram's dread of fever by declaring her inability to keep the nursery sweet while such goings on were allowed; and Packer respectfully made known his determination to resign his situation unless his peculiar domains were kept clear of vermin. The result was, that one afternoon when the boys got back from King's College full of the result of the examination, and the girls returned with the Fräulein from their last literature class of the session, they found that a clean sweep had been made of all their treasures; and when they rushed frantically from one haunt to another, nothing but clean, tidy, horrid emptiness met their eyes. Of course a great deal of howling and lamenting followed. Claude and Rose thought that something might be made of an appeal to Professor Ingram, who had actually been present at the capture of the blind-worm, and had then told Claude and Rose a story of a menagerie that he and his sisters had maintained for several years in a deserted attic of the Scotch home of their youth. Lionel, however, lost the cause before it was presented, by flying into a violent passion with Packer, when he refused to answer his inquiries after his sticklebacks, and laughed at his threats of sending him to prison for stealing his property. Professor Ingram came out of his study while Lionel was stamping and raging about the hall, and ordered him off to bed, though it was Christmas Eve, without permitting a word of explanation; and mamma cried all through the Christmas Eve dinner, which the children generally took with their parents down-stairs; so that the first lighting up of the Christmas-tree that year was

the most doleful ceremony on record in the Ingram household.

When they came to talk it over, boys and girls were a little disposed to blame each other for the catastrophe that ended the good time. The boys thought the girls might have had *nous* enough to conceal the mice in the cradle, so that old Nurse (so blind as she was getting now) could never have poked them out; while Florence declared that she never would believe that the stickle-back got into the Fräulein's sugar-basin by accident. She would always, she said, feel certain that Lionel put it there to revenge himself for the Fräulein's having made him write out a German verb as a punishment for coming in to tea in dirty boots one evening. When the dispute grew too stale to have any further power of excitement in it, a division of interests followed, and the commonwealth broke up. Lionel, to Claude's disgust, made up his quarrel with Packer, and fell back into a habit, discontinued during the good time, of slipping away to the down-stairs regions, and spending a large part of his play-hours in the butler's pantry, or in the coach-house, no one knew exactly how. Claude cut out card-board models of pumps and steam-engines, or buried himself lazily in story-books; and Rose fell in love with Lucy Fanshawe at a dancing-party, voted all the boys' pursuits stale, and had a violent reaction towards dolls' plays and dolls' needlework, into which Maggie and Lilly threw themselves with enthusiasm, joined by Florence now and then. Lucy's influence was on the wane at the time of Rose's visit to the Home, and it had continued to decline steadily ever since. Strange to say, it was Florence, the one among the sisters who had least in common with Lucy, who took it upon herself to resent the wrong done to her, and to

reproach Rose with her fickleness. Florence had not been greatly pleased when they were first thrown into daily communication with Lucy, from her beginning, after the Christmas holidays to attend the English classes to which they belonged. She had never thought it necessary, as did the others, during Mr. Henderson's history lecture, to choke with smothered laughter every time that Lucy bethought herself of sticking her parasol-ring into her eye, and staring down at her atlas with an exact imitation of the puckered forehead and twisted nose, with which old Mr. Henderson studied his notes. She would not even allow that it was more amusing to watch Lucy than to listen to Mr. Henderson; yet when Rose came round to the same opinion, and was vexed one day to have missed hearing the story of Epaminondas' death at Mantinea, through being distracted by Lucy's antics, Florence called her mean, and informed the school-room party how differently she would behave, and how she would stand up for her friend if she had one. As no one ever remembered to have seen Florence show the least preference for anybody or anything, except an armless soldier doll, rejected by all the other children as worthless, to which she had been devoted all her nursery days—and the lame kitten, whose loss she still mourned—this remark made a great impression, and led to a saying, whenever Florence was out of temper, that she was saving up all her pleasantness for her friend, Sophia Sophonisba, whenever she should turn up. It was Maggie who suggested Sophia Sophonisba as a suitably high-sounding name for Florence's perfect friend that was to come; and as it was the only original suggestion ever known to emanate from Maggie, it was considered due to her not to let it drop.



The question now most frequently debated among the sisters, in furtive English and bad French and German, was whether or not they should ask their mother to invite Lucy to spend Lilly's birth-day, which was to be a whole holiday, with them.

Lucy, living with her grandmother, and having at present no governess, and caring very little for her place in class, could command a whole holiday whenever she pleased; and they had certainly promised to invite her. Yet to have Lucy out of temper for a whole day would not be agreeable; and she had taken Rose's gravity at the late history lessons, since the day of Epaminondas' death, very much to heart, and evidently considered her ability to withstand the parasol-rig a convincing proof of chilled affection and hardness of heart.

The question was not settled on the morning of the birth-day; but as Lucy's grandmother only lived on the opposite side of the square, a few doors lower down, it would do to speak to mamma about sending the invitation any time in the course of the morning. As soon as breakfast was over, and the boys gone off to school, Lilly and Maggie, in all the delight of having a whole idle day before them, repaired to the nursery, to dust the dolls' house and decide whether it looked well enough without the piano to be shown to Lucy; and Rose and Florence stood happily doing nothing but talk English over the school-room fire, and were just in danger of relapsing from an amicable discussion of "Crofton Boys" into the old dispute about constancy and Lucy Fanshawe, by way of Hugh's conduct to Holt, when the talk was interrupted by a message that Miss Rose was wanted by her mamma in her bed-room.

Mrs. Ingram seldom rose till the middle of the

morning, and was taking her breakfast in bed when Rose went to her; Nurse Lewis was arranging the dressing-table at the far end of the long pretty room, with Wilfred, the eldest of the nursery children, standing by her, and furtively handling the ornaments when her head was turned another way. The two younger nursery children, Trotty and Tiny, aged respectively two and a half and one and a half, were seated on the bed on each side of mamma, enjoying scraps of thin bread-and-butter and sips of egg from mamma's breakfast-tray, with all the added zest that could be imparted to these dainties by the certainty that nurse would put a stop to the feast as soon as she looked round, with remonstrances on the score of their having already eaten a sufficient breakfast in the nursery. Mrs. Ingram smilingly invited Rose to climb up on to the bed too, and she very gladly obeyed.

It was so like old times: the warm scented air of the room; the pretty things scattered about; mamma's morning face fresh and beautiful, with all her nice soft hair, that nurse had been brushing, coiled loosely under her lace cap. All this brought no end of pleasant remembrances to Rose, of the times before the Fräulein's reign, when every day was a holiday, and she and Maggie had been as free of mamma's room, and enjoyed as much of her notice and petting, as the little ones now did. She was not jealous of the little ones; but certainly, having a moment to spare to visit mamma in her own room was a very important part of the treat of a whole holiday.

"Oh dear!" she began, before mamma had finished kissing her. "How nice it is here, to be sure! Mamma, you used to have that very same tiny silver basin for your sugar, with the paroquet on the lid, when I was a baby.

I remember so well how delicious the lumps of sugar out of it used to taste!"

"Try one now," said Mrs. Ingram, dropping a large sparkling white cone from the small pincers on to Rose's hand, "if you are not grown quite too old to like the taste of sugar."

As neither Florence nor the Fräulein were looking on, Rose did not find herself superior to sugar. As soon as the lump had disappeared, she began again, "Oh dear! I wonder so much how it feels to be here every day, with always these same pretty things about you, and never any bothering German or classes to trouble your head about. I wonder whether I shall like it when I am grown up!"

Mrs. Ingram smiled a little sadly. "I hope, my dear, you don't mean to make lying in bed to breakfast, and having nothing to do, your ideal of the privileges of being grown-up. I should be sorry if the life you see me obliged to lead gave you that notion. The indulgences look pleasant, perhaps, to you children; but that is because you know nothing about the pain, and languor, and bad nights, that make them necessary, or how glad I should be to be able to do without them."

"Mamma, I am very sorry; I did not know that you minded being generally rather ill."

"I don't wish to complain; but you are growing a tall girl, Rose, and can understand what I say to you. It would be the worst part of my invalidism, and of my being—perhaps, love—less energetic and resolute than the head of a family should be, if through watching me you learned to admire and like habits that are not the best."

"Mamma, how good it is of you to talk to me like

this! I never thought you would before. It's better than being a baby again, to have you talk to me. I will think just as you like about habits and all that; but I hope you will not mind my loving you best, and thinking you prettier and nicer than anybody else, however strong and well they are."

"But, Rose, suppose a time should come—sometimes I think it is coming quickly—when no one can any longer think me nice or pretty; when I am quite sickly, and faded, and nervous, so that people really do find it difficult to bear with me."

"Oh, mamma! I was just going to say I wished you were like that now, that I might just show you how I would love you; but I won't say it, for of course it would be bad for you. If ever such a time does come, however, you shall see. Of course you will always be just *mamma* to us, and it will always be delicious to be with you when you will let us come. Why, I don't suppose Mrs. Marshall is nice to look at, at all, or ever was, and yet those children did seem to love her so—and even the father, who throws boots.—Mamma, I should so like to tell you all about the Marshalls, if you have time to hear."

But Mrs. Ingram had once or twice before had experience of Rose's lengthiness when she was embarked on a story that had taken her fancy, and believing the Marshalls to be as unsubstantial as most of the people whose names Rose introduced into her conversation, she thought it wise to evade the subject. "My dear, I am afraid Willie is getting near the table where papa has left his razors. I must keep my eye upon him while nurse is busy, and I am nervous lest Tiny should get restless and fall off the bed if I don't attend to her. I think I had better tell you why I sent for

you this morning, and send you away. It is Lilly's birth-day to-day, you know."

"Oh, yes—and the Fräulein has given us a holiday, and gone up-stairs to her room to write letters."

"Up-stairs, to write in the cold! Why does not she stay in the shool-room?"

"We did not say anything to show we wanted her away—at least, I don't think we did, though, of course, so long as there is a person in the room speaking German, even to herself, it does give rather a schoolly taste to one's holiday. But I really don't think we any of us said so."

"I am afraid you must have looked it at the poor Fräulein. Well, I will see if I can persuade nurse to light a fire in the Fräulein's room this morning; and now you'll be glad to hear that Grandmamma Ingram and Aunt Rachel are coming to dine in the school-room in the middle of the day, and that I have sent a note across to ask old Mrs. Fanshawe to come and bring Lucy."

"Sent it, have you, mamma, already?"

"Yes, Rose; I thought it was what you would all like."

"Oh, thank you, thank you—yes—so we do; we were talking about asking you to invite Lucy."

"That is right. I thought for a minute, by your face, dear, that I had made a mistake; and I should have been so disappointed if you had not liked what I had done. And now, Rose dear, I want to consult you about Lilly's birth-day present. I have not been able to get out all this week to buy her anything, but papa was speaking about it while he was dressing this morning."

"Papa!"

"Yes, indeed, my dear! Was it not good of him? Your papa spoke about it himself. He said he should like something handsome to be given to-day; something that would give pleasure to you all in the school-room, because he has been—and I am sure, my dear, so have I—very sorry for you all ever since we were obliged to send your pets away. Papa thought the present might be some tame animal or bird, that would be an amusement to you all, as you are all so fond of live things, and yet not come in the way of the servants. When I said I was afraid that there would be difficulties, and that I could not think of any live thing to which the servants could make no objection, he smiled and said, 'You had better consult Rose.'"

"Papa said that!" and as Rose spoke, the colour rushed up to the roots of her hair; and she gave mamma's hand, which she was holding, a vehement little squeeze.

Mamma returned a congratulatory smile. "Yes, he did, really; you see he thinks it is time you began to be my little counsellor."

"Oh mamma, I do hope I shall not make any great mistake. Do you mean that I am to go somewhere with you and help you to choose?"

"Not with me, my dear. I must not go out while this frost lasts. I am thinking of sending you with Anne in a cab to the Pantheon, to look about among the birds and pets there, and see if you could discover something you are sure nurse would not object to. Remember, it must not make any noise; and it must not be able to stray down-stairs and annoy Packer; and there must not be any possibility of a disagreeable smell."

"Yes, I see it will have to be a very particular sort of a pet animal indeed," and Rose covered her eyes with her hands. "Let me think—gold and silver fish! O mamma, I see it! Not a globe with gold-fish in it though—the boys would call that stupid—but an aquarium, with stones and sand at the bottom, and sea anemones that Lionel can feed with bits of meat; and shrimps, and crabs, and little wriggling things that Claude can read about in books, and Florence put into her pictures. Mamma, it will be lovely! Sea things are stiller than mice, you know; and they can't live out of the water; and they don't smell; so they will please everybody. Lilly was never tired of looking at Lionel's sticklebacks; and I will take care that there shall be odder and uglier things in our aquarium than even sticklebacks. Don't you think it will do, mamma?"

"Yes, indeed I do, my dear; I think it is a very clever suggestion, and that it will please papa. I remember he talked of getting an aquarium for himself once. See, he left a sovereign on my breakfast-tray for me to give you to spend, and I have added half a sovereign for my share."

"Is not that a great deal of money, mamma? Would not it buy coals enough to keep up a fire all through the winter?"

"I am afraid not, my dear; but why should you trouble your head about coals? There is no danger of our fires going out, even if we do indulge ourselves in spending thirty shillings on a birth-day present once in a way."

Rose had thought of the reception-room fire, but she said no more. The present was in honour of Lilly's birth-day, and how good papa and mamma were to think so much about it! She drew Lady Dunallan's

gift from her pocket. "Is it not lucky that I have such a whole safe purse to put all that gold into?"

"Empty, Rose!" Mrs. Ingram remarked, as she dropped the two pieces of money inside. "What have you done with your birth-day present?"

"If you please, I will tell you, mamma; but it would be a very long history, for it would have to begin with all about the Marshalls, and you said you had not time for them this morning."

"I don't think we have either of us time to spare. You must set out on your expedition at once, for Anne must be back in time to lay the cloth for the early dinner, or Packer will be put out, so you must not keep her, my dear. If you don't spend quite all this money on the aquarium, you may buy for dear little Lilly any trifle you think she will like, as a special gift from me to herself."

"A piano for the doll's house! O mamma, you don't know how happy I am!" and Rose gave Mrs. Ingram an ecstatic hug, which nearly dragged her out of bed, and brought Nurse Lewis from the end of the room, with expostulations, and proposals to carry off all the children, and leave Mrs. Ingram to rest for half an hour before her dressing.

"You had better not let Maggie and Florence know where you are going," Mrs. Ingram said to Rose, as she was leaving the room. "They would beg to go with you, and I could not let them. Maggie has a sore throat, nurse tells me; and Florence might be troublesome with Anne, and keep her out too long, which I trust you, Rose, not to do."

The mystery about where she was going, which Rose maintained while she was being dressed for her drive, threw the school-room party into a higher state of



excitement than a true statement of facts, remarkable as these were, would have done; but it also magnified Rose's delight in her secret mission. The whole family assembled at the dining-room window to see her and Anne drive off in a cab; and Packer, who had his curiosity as well as other people, was actually good-natured enough to lift little Willie on his shoulder that he might look over the blind. The wonder about what she would bring back with her, for of course they all guessed she had gone out to buy a birth-day present, was engrossing enough to fill everyone's thoughts till dinner-time; and as the hours passed on, expectation grew, and took magnificent shapes and colours.

The boys got back from school, though it was a late day, before Rose's return; and they were met, by all the little ones in a body on the stairs, with the news of some great event impending, before they had had time to unstrap their satchels from their backs.

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## CHAPTER VI.

### A SNOWY DAY IN THE MODELS.

BITTER, bitter cold, and as dark as pitch! Rose Marshall put her nose out of the bed where she lay with all her sisters, about half-past six o'clock on the morning of Lilly's birth-day, and drew it hastily in again. There certainly would be no use in getting up yet for a long time. She had heard her father, who had lately got a job in a distant part of London, stirring about in his room, next to theirs; and then she had heard

him lift his tool-basket from a nail by the door, and go down-stairs. Out into the cold, without having so much as looked at a fire, without the cup of warm coffee that mother had always had ready for him before he went out last winter; without any nice slices of bread-and-meat in his dinner-tin, such as mother used to cut for him; and father was not a strong man—he had been complaining of his throat last night. Rose sighed, and put her nose out of the bed again; but Polly, who did not like the loss of warmth that followed her sister's attempts to get up, pulled her back again under the blanket. There was nothing to be done now; and if she had awakened ever so much earlier, what could she have done? There was no meat in the house to cut nice slices from, and very little coffee and bread—only just enough for herself and the children; and yesterday morning, when she had tried to light a fire very early, that father might come in and warm himself, and have some coffee before he started, the sticks had been damp and refused to kindle properly, the room had filled with smoke, and Susie had coughed, and awakened Polly and Teddy, who quarrelled and screamed till father came in, and boxed Teddy's ears, and scolded her for wasting fuel. Father would stop and get a cup of coffee at the first coffee-stall, and go to an eating-house for his dinner; it was not what mother liked—she said she hated such London ways—but, at all events for to-day, Rosie did not see how it could have been prevented. Another day, perhaps, she might be able to remember to put the sticks on the hob over-night to dry; and to have the kettle filled, and a few good lumps of coal chosen out, and put on the hearth, handy, as mother used to do when she wanted to get father

his breakfast very early, last year. She might manage all that herself, if things would only fall out a little straight during the day, and she had not to go to bed at night in such a scramble, and so very, very tired. If only she could find herself again in one of the tidy regular days, when school, and work, and meals, came always at the right moment, and without any struggle—such as used to be in the cottage at Brooklyn, or just the first few months after they came to London, when mother was strong, and father had not so many acquaintances who tempted him to stay out at night. Rosie dropped off to sleep again, with Polly nestling for warmth in her arms, while she was picturing to herself the details of one of mother's tidy days, and wishing she knew how to bring them back.

Time slipped on, and the cold grey light of a London day crept into the room, dispelling the darkness indeed, but showing a great many objects for newly-opened eyes to rest on, that would not certainly have greeted them if it had been one of mother's tidy days they were awakening to. The children were thoroughly roused at last by the sound of stirrings in the third room of their suite, into which mother had taken Blind Ben as lodger, when she first began to find how very difficult it was to make up the high rent of even the smallest set of rooms in such a respectable place as the Models. The notion of having to sink to a less respectable house had been very repugnant to Mrs. Marshall; and she had hit on this expedient, contrary to all rule as it was, to stave off the dreaded necessity as long as possible. Nobody said anything, because it was understood that Mrs. Marshall had taken Blind Ben into her family to manage for him; and Blind Ben was uncle to the woman who kept the grocer's shop at

the end of the street, whose good word was considered worth having, by even the most independent of the lodging-house inmates. The grocer's wife, pleased to have placed her blind relative in such honest hands, had made herself responsible for the weekly rent to Mrs. Marshall, in money or goods; and it soon became obvious to all who took any interest in the matter, that the doles which Blind Ben brought from the grocer's shop on Saturday nights, a great deal more regularly than the husband brought his wages, were becoming more and more important to the sick woman and her little ones.

The comfort of the home had indeed disappeared since Mrs. Marshall had fallen ill; but by that time Ben had grown fond of the children, and declared that he would muddle on as best he could, till his kind landlady's return, rather than seek other quarters, especially as Rose and Clara had lately learned to make themselves useful to him in taking out the old cane bottoms of the chairs he re-seated, and by thus saving his time for better work, enabled him to give a few pence towards the rent on his own account. He had been listening that morning for the usual sounds in his little neighbour's room; and not hearing them, began to sing, as he moved about, dressing himself, and raking out the cinders in his grate, ready for Rose to come in and light his fire. He could not begin his day's work till that was done, and till he had had a cup of warm tea or coffee. His hands were far too benumbed that bitter morning to serve him for eyes, as they usually did in his intricate work. He sat down to wait patiently when he had done all he could, not even sighing, though he put out his numb fingers to feel the basket he had left half unfinished when he went to bed. He

was used to waiting; so he sat still in the cold, and finished the Morning Hymn at the top of his voice.

Rosie had jumped up at the second verse; and was on her knees now before their own fire-place, battling with the damp sticks, and the bits of hard slaty coal and the unsifted cinders. Her chapped, chilblained hands were bleeding with the cold; and the floor, on which Teddy had spilt a kettle-full of water last night, just before getting into bed, was a sheet of ice most chilling to her bare tender feet. Oh, it *was* cold a miserable! Why could not everyone live in a Happy Valley, like Rasselas, and stay there? Why could not everyone be rich, like that pretty pink-faced little lady, and ride in carriages, and wear soft warm dresses, and velvet hats with rose-coloured feathers in them, and a white delicious fur round their necks? Where was the use of getting up to be so miserably cold all day? Should she creep back into bed, and let them all be late for school once more, and trust to the chance of some good-natured woman from the lower rooms coming up by-and-by, and lighting their fire for them? No! for how Mother Ursula looked at her last time they were all late! and the Sisters were never late, though they had to get up in the cold too.

Oh dear! that little tongue of struggling flame, that did seem as if it was going to fasten itself on to the large lump of coal at last, has flickered and gone out, and all is as dark as ever again. Rose felt as if she must sit down and cry in despair. Blind Ben had finished the hymn now, and was beginning at the middle verse over again.

“Glory to Thee, Who safe hast kept,  
And hast refreshed me whilst I slept;  
Grant, Lord, when I from death shall wake,  
I may of endless light partake.”

*"Endless light!"* The words seemed to put some warmth and light into Rose. There was no use in spilling more water about the room, in the shape of tears. It would be all their fire would do before dinner-time, to dry the floor, as it was. She must get two or three more sticks, and try again. What was it mother used to say about air being one of the things wanted to make a fire burn; and about its being best to build up the sticks and cinders to a pyramid shape? Ah, that was it; now for the bit of paper that had wrapped the rice Blind Ben had brought for their dinner yesterday—and let us see the result. This time the effort was successful. The sticks began to crackle hopefully, the smoke went up the chimney, instead of puffing out into the room. Soon the coals began to send out little jets of flame, and the cinders to glow, and there was the household friend, the fire-sprite—which somehow always made Rose think of mother's face, and of better times—smiling at her from the grate, and trying hard to give a look of comfort and homishness to the untidy little room. Rose got up from her knees, and picking her own boots and stockings from the heap of things on the floor, proceeded to put them on; while she remembered that there were some children in London getting up at this hour, in rooms where there were no damp sticks even, or flinty coals to make a fire with, and no prospect of coffee and bread to come after. She must not forget to return thanks for the comforts bestowed on them; and her voice took up the tune Blind Ben had now left off, and repeated,

"Glory to Thee, Who safe hast kept,  
And hast refreshed me whilst I slept."

Just at that moment, at the other end of London, a

group of warmly dressed little girls were standing, with clasped hands, round a well-filled breakfast-table, in a well-warmed prettily furnished room, while their governess said Grace in German. The eldest girl of the group listened to the words, and tried to follow their meaning with her heart, for it had lately occurred to her that Grace was something spoken to God, to which He listened; but the others stared about them, and made up their minds whether they would have jam or butter on their last slice of bread, when they had eaten up the smoking basins of bread-and-milk before them. It had really never come into their minds that food, and warmth, and health, and day-light, were gifts from their Father in Heaven, for which they owed Him thanks, at least.

Clara had dressed herself while Rosie was lighting the fire, and they now between them managed to get Susie, and Polly, and Teddy, into their clothes. The clothes would all have been the better for a little shaking, and drying, and mending, over-night, such as they would have had if mother had been at home; and as Rosie stuck crooked pins where strings or hooks should have been, and saw how Teddy's poor little blue toes stuck out through his undarned socks and broken shoes, she planned how she really would be like mother that evening, and get the children to come in early out of the street, and put them to bed in good time; and then she would beg needle and thread and patches from the Sisters, and sit by the fire, and mend the things; and perhaps father would stay at home and read to her. She would remember to ask at the school library for a pretty book for him, that would tempt him to stay, if things were pretty quiet and comfortable. Only, somehow, the days did go in such a scramble; and

Teddy was such a handful, and the other boys in the Models never let him alone, but put such ways into his head; twice already he had escaped from Rosie's hands, half-dressed, and begun making a slide down the room, where he had last night upset the water, that might now have been boiling on the fire for their breakfast.

He had to be left to slide as much as he pleased after he was dressed, though it was making a terrible mess of the floor; for Clara must go to wait on Blind Ben, and Rosie, finding all the water left in the jug frozen to a hard lump, thought she would venture down-stairs to beg a kettle-full of boiling water from some neighbour who had managed to get her fire lighted earlier than herself. She meant to go down to the bottom of the block, for there was the greatest amount of intercourse between the dwellers in the lottiest and the dwellers in the lowest rooms; the tenants of the intermediate floors belonging chiefly to the well-to-do people, whose favourite boast it was that "they kept themselves to themselves, and knew nothing of their neighbours." However, it chanced that a passage door on the third story stood open, and Rose paused to look down the gallery; a sitting-room door was open, too—how nice it would be if she could get what she wanted there, and be spared the cold cold trudge to Mrs. Chapman's apartments in the cellars! She took a step or two forward, and peeped in. It was Mrs. Johnstone's suite of rooms; the family were just sitting down to breakfast. The eldest son, he that was shopman in a big place in the city, had just brought in a scuttle of coals (they had a coal closet), and now he was heaping such lovely round knobs on a fire that blazed half up the chimney already; on one of the hobs a big kettle was sputtering and steaming, and on the other



stood a plate piled high with buttered toast—surely, than four people could eat,” Rosie Mr. Johnstone had not appeared from the inn yet; but there was Mrs. Johnstone sitting by the tea-pot, and the second boy, the telegraph boy with the red stripes on his brown coat, was drawing a cloth over the table, and looking ready enough to begin business. Rose knew him well by sight. He had lately joined the Guild, and she had seen him in church on Guild Sunday.

He was the first to spy out Rose. “I say, there’s a little girl standing at our door waiting to speak to you. Oh, don’t she look cold!”

“Shut the door, Tom,” said Mrs. Johnston to her eldest son. “There’s the staircase for you to go down that wants to go down from the upper part, and no one has any right to come up this passage. I don’t live here. It’s bad enough that any of our own people can come *back’ards* and *for’ards*. The worst, as I always tell your father, of our not having a house all to ourselves—that people of all sorts seem to think they may come and spy upon you at the door this minute, Tom or Reuben, I say, one of them.”

Tom was still busy with the coal-scuttle; and the telegraph boy, having got to the door first. He looked in, and then stood looking at Rose through the glass. “Oh, I say,” he began awkwardly, “what do you want? you know you ought not to come here. Rose Marshall, ain’t you?”

“Please, if you’d give me a kettle-full of hot water, I would be so much obliged to you; every day the water in our room is frozen to a lump of ice, and it takes such a deal of time and fire to make it boil.”

“Well, give me yer kettle.” He took it,

the door all but a chink, through which Rose overheard a short discussion that followed within the room.

"I never knew such a thing of you, Reuben—encouraging the attic people to come here begging; I won't have it; I shall never have a minute's peace, or a pot or a pan to call my own."

"Never mind—just this once, mother; the cold's enough to kill a cat; and it's Rose Marshall, her whose mother's lying sick in the hospital, and she belongs to our Guild that I told you about."

"Get along with you with your Guilds and your rubbish. I never did see such a boy; but it all comes of living close to a church where there's always a something going on!" said the mother, in a mollified tone; and Rose heard the water gurgling into her kettle, and knew that Reuben had got his way. "I'd never have let you have nothing to do with them Guilds, and church-goings, and singings, if I thought it was to bring all the thriftless people from the attics round my door; but there now, Reuben, you understand, it's only to be this once—you're never to do it again."

"Not till next time, I promise you, mother," said Reuben, gaily; and the next minute he was at the door, handing the kettle to Rose through the chink. "It's pretty hot now; take care it don't burn you," he said, slipping the handle on to Rosie's blue fingers.

Rose looked up into his face with the same thoughtful far-away expression in her eyes, that her namesake had noticed before. "It is not a cup of cold water you've given me," she said, "it's hot water; but it must be the same thing, don't you think so? for it's what we want most here."

"Cold water! I don't know whatever you mean," said Reuben, thoroughly astonished.

"Why, you were at church on the last Guild Sunday; I saw you—don't you remember?"

"Oh yes, I know—the text of the sermon—thank you," said Reuben, his bright morning face flushing all over with a fresh glow of pleasure, as he went back to his place at the breakfast-table, with the words in his mind, "So much as a cup of cold water in My Name, shall in no case lose his reward." To be sure, the preacher said that was one thing the Guild was for, to enable its members to show kindnesses to each other in His Name. Reuben had heard and thought about it, but Rose's application, fitting words and deed together, put it in a new practical light. He had begun by making the easiest, least costly gift; and now he remembered that the preacher, in speaking of the reward, had said that some part of it would be increased willingness and power to serve. As he sat eating his breakfast, he began already to think of the next thing; and this time the next thing did not lie far away. Rosie was right in her conjecture, that there was more toast than could possibly be eaten by four people.

Mrs. Johnstone, though a liberal provider, did not generally miscalculate the wants of her household; but to-day she had rather exaggerated the appetising effects of the frost; and when time was up, and the male part of the family had to hurry away to their several duties, there still remained six handsome well-buttered squares in the dish. She looked at them in some dismay. "I'll tell ye what, Reuben," she said, "I'll just wrap 'em up in a bit of paper, and you shall put 'em in your pocket to nibble at as you run along. There's nothing so good for keeping cold out as putting plenty in; and run off your legs as you are at your place, you'll find yourself sharp-set long before dinner-time, I know."

Mrs. Johnstone abhorred waste, but it had never occurred to her that to eat more than you want is a worse sort of waste than actually to throw food away. She thrust the folded paper into Reuben's pocket, while he picked up his cap. "There, you need not run off in such a hurry; you might as well give yourself another warm while you tie your comforter—you've a few minutes to spare still."

Reuben was his mother's favourite, and got all the petting, and deserved it too, which is not often the case with favourites. He gave his mother a hearty, sounding kiss, but moved to the door all the same. He had made up his mind what to do with his spare minutes, and as soon as he was out on the staircase he acted on his intention; up instead of down, three steps at a time, in breathless haste, till he stood on the upper landing, outside the Marshalls' door.

Blind Ben was at work by this time on his basket, and singing again at the top of his voice a hymn that always came uppermost and was oftenest repeated when provisions were scarce, and prospects chilling for his little neighbours—

"It mayn't be in my time,  
It mayn't be in thy time;  
But yet in His own time,  
The Lord will provide."

Reuben did not wait for his knock to be answered, he opened the door and went straight in. The little Marshalls were all standing round a table at the end of the room, on which were two mugs filled with something hot. Teddy was trying to draw one of them down to the level of his mouth, and spilling part of its muddy brown contents on his pinafore; and Rose, with a knife, was hacking at a lump of bread, considering how she

could divide it into five portions that would not look dolefully small. "Do you like buttered toast?" said Reuben, walking up to the table and putting down upon it the paper which he had unfolded so as to show its contents. "Here's just a slice apiece for you and one to spare, and it ain't bad on a cold morning."

The children were too much astonished to say a word; and Reuben was out of the room before Rose had recovered herself sufficiently to thank him. She ran after him, however, to the head of the spiral staircase, and looked over before he had gone down many steps. "Oh, you are kind—oh, thank you!"

He looked up, and came back a step or two. "I say, where do you get your coals? Next time you want any fetching, just tell me; I'm always home at one o'clock for dinner, and you might look out for me at the bottom of the staircase when you wanted anything done. Mother would be willing to do you many a kind turn, I know, if you didn't vex her, spilling your coals and things on the stairs—she is always going on about that; but if you have to lug 'em up from the bottom yourself, I don't wonder at it—such a little un as you."

"It is hard," said Rose, over the balusters; "and I'm sorry I vex your mother."

"Then next time look out for me to help you. Good-bye; I must run now." And Reuben's head disappeared down the winding staircase; while Rose returned to her breakfast.

Buttered toast, to be properly appreciated by those to whom it is a singular luxury, requires a longer time for its consumption than dry bread. The school-bell had begun to ring, before Polly and Teddy, who had divided the sixth slice between them, had come to the end of their second helping; and then a bustle ensued,

which put an end to Rose's hopes of beginning the day by doing each piece of work at its proper time. The table had to be left with the spilt coffee on it, and the mugs unwashed, while she searched frantically among the tumbled bedclothes for Polly's knitted shawl, and Teddy's comforter and cap. The rim of the cap proved to be nearly torn off, and Rosie remembered that the Sisters had told her two days ago, when it was beginning to be loose, to sew it on; and now Teddy declared that yesterday he had been desired not to come to school again till his cap was mended; and Susie, on hearing this, suddenly began to cry, and remembered that her teacher had told her to come next time in a cleaner pinafore, and that she could not abear to be pointed at by the other children. Rosie was ready to cry herself with vexation and bewilderment; and Clara, in indignation for Rosie, shook and slapped them both vigorously, with no other result than to set Polly off screaming in chorus with Susie, and to provoke Teddy to stand on his head in the middle of the slide, which was now beginning to thaw a little. Clean pinafores and materials for mending were not to be got by scolding or screaming. Rosie's thimble was not in her work-bag, and she had neither needle nor thread at hand. She had to manage the best way she could to pacify the rebels, by changing Susie's pinafore inside out, the inside being a shade the cleaner, and by fastening the flap of Teddy's cap with a big pin, so as to make it look tolerably tidy so long as it stayed on his head.

"Now, Teddy, *do* let it stay as it is," she said coaxingly; "keep your hands off it, do, till you get inside the school-room door; and, come now, I'll let you have the pretty young lady's bright penny to play with all

day, if you'll be good, and come right off to school this minute."

Teddy would not stir till he had the bright penny in his own keeping, and a little time was lost in poking it out of a hole in the wall appropriated to special treasures, where Clara had prudently hidden it; but at last the little procession was fairly got into motion. Rosie stayed last, to lock the room door, and give the key to Blind Ben, and mend up his fire the last thing. He had been singing, "Birds in their little nests agree," all the time they had been quarrelling, but no one had paid any attention to him. She could not help waiting to tell him about Reuben and the buttered toast, so she did not catch up the other children till they had reached the school-house door, and by that time the bell had ceased ringing, and the door was closed while prayers were being read, and no one could enter for the next ten minutes. It was a bitter morning; and oh, it was cold waiting outside! Susie wrapped her arms in her dirty pinafore. Polly was better off with the knitted worsted shawl that had been mother's, wrapped round and round her. Teddy took to stamping about, and flapping his arms like a coachman, and soon succeeded in shaking the loose rim of his cap over his eyes. "I'm not agoing into school with a torn cap, I ain't," he said, saucily peeping over the rim at Rosie. The doors were thrown open that minute, and Rosie, who was nearest the door, looked back from the lesson she was looking over, to say, "Oh yes, you are, Teddy, like a good boy. Ketch 'old of 'is 'and, Susie, and take 'im in along with you."

Other ten-o'clock scholars had come up, and were pressing in through the open doors, some to the large room on the ground-floor, where the infants were

taught; others, among whom were Clara and Rosie, to the upper story. Rosie, with her head again bent over her book, followed a group of big girls upstairs, and Susie made an effort to follow her instructions and 'ketch' hold of Teddy; but he was too quick for her, he whisked away into the middle of the street before she could reach him, and stood making faces, and peeping at her through the torn cap. Susie made another feeble effort to catch him, and then resolving to tell teacher as soon as she had an opportunity, she gave it up in despair. She was not a very bright child, and she had Polly to mind, and she partly sympathised with Teddy in not choosing to show himself in school in his torn cap. If he chose to run about the streets till they came out, it was his own affair; or perhaps he would run home, and persuade Blind Ben to let him sit by his fire all the morning, and watch the basket growing bigger, and that would be nice. Susie had half a mind to play truant too, and thought that at all events she would not say anything about Teddy to the teacher, if she chanced not to ask where he was, as might be the case, since they were all so late that morning.

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## CHAPTER VII.

### LOST, LOST, LOST!

THE first thing that met Rosie's eyes when she came out of school at twelve o'clock, was Susie alone with Polly, seated on the frozen school-house steps, crying. The infants were dismissed half-an-hour before the pupils of the upper school; and Susie, Polly, and



Teddy, usually trotted back to the Models, and sat with Blind Ben till Rosie came home, or one of the Sisters took them into the Home, and let them sit in the children's corner by their fire until dinner-time.

"Whatever are you doing here in the cold, you stupids?" said Clara, shaking Susie by the shoulder, as if she thought her words must be frozen hard, and would require to be shaken out of her mouth.

"Where's Teddy?" asked Rosie, an uncomfortable misgiving shooting into her mind. "You've never let him run away, have you? Why, it's mother's day at the hospital, and we've all to go and see her after dinner. You've never been and gone and lost Teddy! Whatever would mother say if we went to her without Teddy?"

It was a peculiarity of Susie's to turn dumb whenever anybody asked her a question eagerly or in a hurry, and to Rosie's dismay the dumbness came over her now. She stuck her chin into her pinafore, and sobbed louder and louder at every shake from Clara or entreaty from Rosie, but could not be made to bring out a word. Rosie turned at last to Polly, who was contentedly looking on at the commotion with her thumb in her mouth, and who, if she could not say many words, was willing to give all the information in her power. "Is Teddy with Blind Ben?"

Polly shook her head emphatically.

"Is he at the Home?"

More shakes of the head.

"Where is he then?"

"Polly dunno."

"Did he come out of school with you?"

A very solemn shake.

"I wonder you ain't ashamed of yerself, Susie, to

have gone and lost yer little brother; and it was only up the school-room steps ye was asked to mind him; but you never was of no use in all your life; you never was to be trusted," said Clara, administering another shake, and speaking exactly in the tone in which Mrs. Chapman, of the lower storey of the Models, was accustomed to upbraid the one among her eleven unruly children who happened to be in least favour at the moment. Just then, the Sister who had been teaching the upper school passed down the steps, and Rose caught her by her dress, and explained their trouble. Sister Clare did not think it very serious, and spoke encouragingly. The day was too cold, she thought, for even such a gad-about as Teddy to wander far. She advised Rosie to run home and get Blind Ben his dinner, and said that she would take Clara and the little ones into the Home, and ask Mother if they might all have some soup when the Sisters dined. Teddy would be sure to turn up at one place or another when he felt hungry, and Teddy never failed to feel hungry when meal-times came. Susie now found her tongue to say that Teddy had runned away a long time ago, before they went into school; and Rosie thought Sister Clare looked a little grave when she heard it, though she still spoke cheerfully, and bade Rosie run home and inquire of the neighbours if anything had been heard of Teddy since morning. "Perhaps he might have run into Mrs. Chapman's rooms, and be playing about with her boys."

Rose rather shrank from speaking to Mrs. Chapman—she had such a long tongue, and would be sure to think of so many dreadful things that might have happened to Teddy. She contented herself for the present with peeping into the passages, and calling "Teddy!" several times; and then she ran up-stairs to

their own rooms, to comfort herself by telling Blind Ben, and hearing what he would say. For once there was a sound of voices in Blind Ben's room. He had a visitor. Rose paused at the half-opened door before entering. It was Mrs. Younghusband, Ben's niece, from the corner shop. She had her back to the door, but Rose could not be mistaken in the handsome red shawl, and the velvet bonnet with green bows, or in the big covered basket, which Mrs. Younghusband had already emptied of its contents on to Ben's table, and which now stood by her side ready to be taken up again. She was haranguing Ben in a loud expostulatory tone of voice; and he had paused in his work, and was turning up his face towards her, with the patient look upon it, that meant he was hearing something he did not like. "It is not that I grudge the three-and-sixpence," she was saying, "nor Younghusband neither—he never has done that, though you ain't but a wife's uncle to him, and he married me, a poor workhouse girl, out of my first place. He's never been ashamed of my kin, nor grudged my helping of them—I'll do him that justice. But it's the paying good money for what we don't get that goes against us both. For lodgings *and attendance*—them was my words to Mrs. Marshall before ever you came into the place, and a nice tidy place it was then, that we could put you into without being ashamed or having you cast up to us; and now—I don't say it's a pig-sty, for Sister Teresa scoured it down with her own hands not so long ago; but for anything else that's been done to it since last 'ere I was, except to bring in a pack of dirty brats to mess your few poor bits of things worse than they need be messed, I should just like to know what the attendance is we pay for!" and Mrs. Younghusband glanced round on the un-made bed, the un-filled

water-jug, the brown cindery hearth, the littered floor and table, with glances of disgust, that made poor Rosie's heart sink quite down into her shoes, and banished even anxiety about Teddy for the moment. "Does anyone ever come near to do a hand's-turn for you, I want to know? Tell me that!"

Rose tapped softly at the door and entered. "Please, I'm come to look at the fire, and put the soup to warm that Sisters sent last night for Mr. Benjamin's dinner," she said meekly.

"And a great deal of fire you would have found if I had not been here before you," Mrs. Younghusband answered.

It was the prelude to a long scolding, which Rose felt she quite deserved, for to be sure the room was untidy; but she could not help the tears trickling down her face, and threatening to drop into the soup as she poured it into the little saucepan and knelt stirring it before the fire. Blind Ben turned to his work again, and put in little conciliatory sentences whenever Mrs. Younghusband's breath failed; and at last she took up her basket and went away—not, however, till she had ascertained that Rose and her sisters had been invited to dine at the Home, for, "To be sure," she muttered to herself as she flounced down the stairs, "that is but a bit of a helpless white-faced chit to have so many on her hands; and it is not one in a hundred would manage much better than she does, or perhaps as well."

Rose began to strain her ears for the sound of Teddy's feet clattering up the stairs, as soon as the echo of Mrs. Younghusband's steps died away; and when she had poured Ben's soup into the basin, and he was eating it, she told him the story. He had not heard anything of

Teddy all the morning, and Blind Ben's ears were to be trusted more than anybody else's eyes, for he knew the sound of every step that frequented the building; sitting there by himself all day at his solitary work, he seldom failed to take note of everybody's comings and goings. He was quite certain that Teddy had not been near the "Models" since Rose left in the morning.

"Was it not beginning to snow?" he asked so softly. It was extraordinary how Blind Ben knew, but he knew before anyone else the changes in the weather.

Rose ran to the window, and saw the soft thick flakes hurrying one over the other through the air. "I don't think Blind Ben thinks that Teddy could wander so far away as to be lost in the snow?" she asked, with a vague recollection of a story she had heard at Brooklyn, of children frozen to death on a common in a sudden snowstorm.

Blind Ben smiled at the notion of a snow-drift in London streets, in which Teddy could be buried; but he startled Rose with another fear the next minute. "What clothes had Teddy on when he went to school that morning?" he asked.

"The clothes mother made over for him just before she was took ill; they used to be Harry's best at Brooklyn, but they are very shabby and worn now."

"Eh, but there's good stuff in them; they've been real good clothes in their time—and they're worth stealing still!" Ben said, shaking his head.

A conviction flashed on Rosie's mind, that mother would think of that the first thing. She would immediately picture to herself Teddy taken to some dark alley, and stripped and left to freeze, or dressed in rags and huddled up in some dismal cellar among thieves and beggars, and never able to find his way home again.

How could she come before her mother that afternoon without Teddy, and tell her what would cause her such agony! It would be almost as bad as Joseph's brethren coming before old Jacob with the little bloody coat of many colours; worse, as far as she was concerned, Rosie thought, for she loved Teddy with all her heart, and had never been jealous that he was mother's darling, because he was the only boy since Harry died, and could wear Harry's old clothes and look like him. Surely, surely, Teddy would come back before the hour came for their all going into the ward to see mother! She felt she must begin to exert herself to find him. "I think I will go down-stairs again, and ask Mrs. Chapman and the other neighbours if they have seen anything of Teddy," she said.

"Do, deary," answered Ben; "and come back and tell me as soon as you hear anything. I can't get about this weather, my rheumatics is that bad—and I shall weary to hear."

Somehow or other, the news that Teddy Marshall had not been seen since early morning had reached Mrs. Chapman's rooms before Rose arrived there. One of Mrs. Chapman's children had sat next Susie at school; and another, who had not gone to school at all, had met him in the street at half-past nine, sauntering in an opposite direction to the school-house, with a penny in his hand, presumably on his way to the sweet-shop.

A group of women were discussing these particulars round Mrs. Chapman's door when Rosie came up; and she was greeted with "So you've lost your little brother, miss; and whatever will your poor mother say when you go to see her this afternoon? To be sure, it is unlucky that he should have gone and lost himself

to-day, of all days in the week, when his mother, poor dear, is looking out to see him." A great deal of talking followed; and some of the women were very good-natured; one of them went herself to the sweet-shop to inquire if anyone answering to the description of Teddy had been seen there, and brought back no news. But the conversation, though sympathetic, was not of a kind to raise Rose's spirits. Every one of the women had a story to tell of a lost child, who had either remained away several days, to the distraction of its mother, or been brought back with a broken limb before night; and Mrs. Chapman surpassed them all with a mysterious history of a little boy, exactly like Teddy, who was taken to a workhouse, and so changed and disfigured by hair-cropping, washing, and other ill-usage, that his own mother could not recognise him when she was taken a week afterwards to inspect a line of stray children where he was, though he screamed himself into a fit at the sight of her. Rose felt sure that she, to say nothing of her mother, would recognise Teddy before he screamed himself into a fit; but that did not comfort her under the prospect of a possible week of waiting, when this very afternoon—nay, this very minute—in the hospital, their mother was expecting them, and counting the minutes till they appeared. The dinner-bell rang at the Home before the gossip round Mrs. Chapman's door was concluded, and the women advised Rose to run round and get her soup, at all events. Mother Ursula would know what to do about looking for Teddy, if anybody did; and perhaps while they had been talking he might have come back to the Home; and Rose might possibly find him safe with the "Sisters" after all.

Never had Rosie been in such a hurry to have the

little door opened as when she ran across the road and stood before it that day. She had not to wait long, for a group of convalescents were coming to get their dinner, and she stepped in among them. Clara, and Susie, and Polly, and Mary Anne, were seated on the bench near the fire—but no Teddy; and poor Rose felt quite sick and giddy with the disappointment, and had to catch hold of the edge of the table to save herself from falling.

There was always a good deal to do at the Home at dinner-time, for the Sisters waited on their guests themselves; and Mother generally had to listen to particulars of the health of one or other of the convalescents, so that Rose had very little hope of being able to speak to any of the inmates of the Home till dinner was over, especially as she was late; and people were already taking their places at the table in the inner room. There was no room that day for the children at the table. One of the Sisters brought them their soup to the reception-room fire, and Rose detained her to tell her that nothing had been heard or seen of Teddy at the "Models;" and she promised to take the first opportunity of speaking to Mother about it.

It was a very cold day for a little child to be wandering about the streets, but Teddy was a sharp boy for his age, and the Sister thought he would not come to much harm, but come back when he had played truant long enough to make them welcome instead of scold him when he did appear. See, she would put down his basin of soup by the fire to keep hot. Rose ate her soup with little appetite, while her ears ached for the sound of the bell, and every two or three minutes she put down her basin, and ran to the



window to look out into the street, in the hope of seeing Teddy coming along. Oh how happy the sight of the torn flap of his cap would make her! Oh, if only she had mended the cap when Sister Clare told her, perhaps all this would not have happened. It seemed cruel and heartless to her, that the business of the Home should be going on just as usual, just as if Teddy were seated on the children's bench, or their mother were not expecting them up-stairs.

When dinner was over, Mother Ursula came and spoke to Rose. She did not frighten her with conjectures, as the neighbours had done; but Rose could not help seeing that she looked grave, and that she was not very hopeful that Teddy would make his appearance before the hour when the visitors were taken to the ward. She said she would send at once to the nearest police-station, and cause inquiries to be set on foot for Teddy; and she thought Rose had better wait till the latest possible moment for going into the ward.

It was "mothers' afternoon" at the Home—the day when the mothers of the little sick children in the hospital came to see them, and when the women patients received their friends. Soon, frequent rings came at the gate-bell; and Rose, from her seat on the hearth-stone, saw the visitors pass in up the steps through the great door at the end, that led to the wards. She had been in often enough herself to know how it all went on. How little faces grew eager, and little crippled figures dragged themselves upright in their cots, and sick heads turned on pillows, at the sound of the bell; and how when the ward door opened, all faces, young and old, were turned one way; and how one face among them all brightened at sight of the entering figure, and all the others fell.

"Charlie's mother had come," or "Katie's mother, but not mine yet," nine children out of the ten were saying; or "Mrs. Samson has got her children, but mine are late,"—that was what Rose's mother would have to say that afternoon; and it would surprise her all the more, that Rosie had never been late all through the months of her long illness till now. Mother Ursula, though she was busy talking to the "mothers," did not forget Rose Marshall's trouble. She came several times to speak to her.

And once she went herself to the door, and stopped a policeman who was passing, to give him a still more exact description of Teddy than had been sent to the office, and to beg him to exert himself in the search. The policeman was very civil, and spoke kindly; but Rose's heart sank lower than ever, when she found that Mother Ursula was trusting chiefly to what seemed to her a wretchedly forlorn hope. She and Clara had been in the habit of threatening Teddy with being taken by a policeman, as with the most frightful doom that could befall a boy; and Rose knew that in spite of Teddy's bravadoes he was a very nervous child, and would be likely to have recourse to any desperate expedient, such as rushing under an omnibus, or throwing himself down an area, rather than yield to such a fate as being "caught by a Bobby."

"We may wait just one hour more for the chance of Teddy's turning up, before we need let your mother know that he is missing, I think," Mother Ursula said. "It has just struck three, and the visitors go on coming till four. Your mother will fidget, but I think we can keep her tolerably quiet till then; but after that, you had better go to her with the other children, and tell her the truth as quietly as you can; nothing would be

so bad for her as getting worked up into an agony by none of you appearing."

"Oh Mother, won't you tell her, instead of me?"

"I think not, my dear; it will have a much more serious look if I speak about it first. I will be at hand to soothe her when she has heard, but you must speak first; however, there is an hour yet—let us hope and pray, my dear child!"

"Oh Mother, I can't sit still that whole hour. Mayn't I run round to the Models again for the chance of his being somewhere about there, and then down to the street-corner to look out? I think I shall be less miserable if I am looking out; it will be like doing something."

"Go, if you like, my child; and if you find the watching only makes it worse, or if you get very cold, the church is open, and you may go in there. I think you would find it helped you, Rosie!"

Mother had to turn back into the reception-room, for some one called her; and Rosie ran down the long street to the main road, then up the staircase of the Model lodging-house to Blind Ben's room, then down to Mrs. Chapman's, distractedly here and there, her face growing whiter and more frightened every minute. Everybody was very kind to her, and promised help in looking for Teddy; but everybody shook his or her head. "It was a long time, certainly," they said, "for a little chap like Teddy to be missing—in such weather, too; he could not be in the street all this time—why, he'd be frozen to death!" they said. Rose had no patience to listen to such prophecies now; she ran out of the Models as quickly as she had run in, and made her way back to the corner of the road.

Even the main road, was wonderfully quiet; for the snow was still falling quickly, and just for that

one hour, all the dirt and ugliness and shabbiness of road, houses, and pavement, were hidden away under a white covering of pure glittering snow. A few people were hurrying along, holding white snow domes over their heads; and some two or three shivering figures, dejected and benumbed with the bitter cold, were creeping under the shelter of the houses, with heads bent forward, cowering before the storm; but none of these was Teddy.

Old beggars, and young beggars, homeless haunters of these poor streets—Rose recognised some of their faces as they passed by her, but the little face she was longing to see did not appear. She was slowly turning into a snow pillar herself, but the pain in her mind was too great for her to heed the cold. The stillness and unusual beauty of the scene took her back to Brooklyn; and she remembered a snowy day in the last winter they spent there, when she and Harry had stood together before their cottage door, looking out over glittering snowy fields for father to come home from his work, that they might be the first to show him the grand snow-man, with a pipe in his mouth, that they had built up in a corner of the garden. And how father had admired it, to be sure! And then they had all gone into the bright tidy cottage, where mother sat by the fire; and they had roasted some chestnuts in the embers, that father had brought home in his pocket for them. And now Harry was dead, and mother sick, and father changed; and if she had to go up into the ward, and tell mother that Teddy was lost, Rose thought it would break her heart. Oh, no, no! she never could get out that word to mother—she never could bear to see the look that would come into her hollow eyes, and her poor, poor white face working.

Rose's eyes were too blinded with tears now to see distance down the street, and a wild thought of flinging away herself, and hiding in the snow, seized her. She did turn round, and set off running, and plucked a few yards or so through the snow, without heed where she was going; but before long she stumbled and fell, hitting her side rather sharply against a stone; and when she got up, she was trembling so that she had no longer the power to run. The stone against which she had stumbled was the stone before the church door, and the door was open. Yes, she would go there, as Mother Ursula had advised; perhaps she would find it easier to wait there than anywhere else. The church was empty just then; but it was warm, and the air felt kinder there than outside. Rose crawled a few steps forward, and seated herself on one of the hassocks, by the font. The next day was a saint's day, and there were to be some christenings during even-  
ing; and a lady had been into the church and decorated the font with flowers; for at the church near the houses of the little ones, whether they came from rich or poor homes, were received with tokens of loving welcome.

The font had looked just like that when Polly had been brought to be christened; and as Rose sat on the stool, and smelt the fragrance that the flowers breathed round her, it seemed to her as if the air was filled with the music of the hymn that was always sung in the church on the evenings of the christenings. She began to murmur the words to herself—

“Seeing I am Jesu's lamb,  
Ever glad at heart I am;  
O'er my Shepherd kind and good,  
Who provides me daily food,  
And His lamb by name doth call,  
For He knows and loves us all.”

Then Teddy could not really be lost! A strange thrill of joy came into Rose's heart with that thought. And she slid off the hassock on to her knees, and laid her head down on the cushion on the topmost step of the font. No, Teddy was not really lost; the Good Shepherd knew where he was! Rose had thought about the Good Shepherd often before. She had heard of Him in that church, and Mother Ursula had so often spoken to her, and to the other children at the school, of His condescension and His tender love, that her heart had melted and glowed, and she had longed to belong wholly to Him; but now, in this hour of anxiety, it seemed to her as if He spoke to her Himself, and that she could see His tender protecting arms stretched out, and hear His gentle voice, inviting all the feeble little ones in the world to creep into them and be safe. Teddy was His little lamb, Teddy *could* not be lost. There was no place, even in London—no dreadful place, through which that Hand could not guide him. The thought gave Rose courage to pray as she had never prayed before in her life, with a certainty of being heard that made prayer a new exercise—no form, but real earnest words, pleadings that had life and death in them, spoken to a trusted Almighty Friend, Who could not fail to hear and answer. When Rose had breathed out all that was in her heart, not only about Teddy, but about her father and her mother and her own remorse at having failed so often, and her longing to be helped to do her work better, she rose from her knees, feeling a new creature, no longer wild and despairing, but ready to do the best that she could, whatever might have happened. It must be four o'clock now. She thought she would go back to the Home, and if Mother Ursula thought it right

for her to go into the ward without Teddy, and tell her mother she had lost him, she would go, and try to comfort poor mother and bear her anger and her reproaches as well as she could, confessing she had deserved them. Mother would not be without comfort; for she knew the Good Shepherd, and never liked anyone to say that they had lost Harry; because Harry was with the Good Shepherd, and belonged to them all as much as ever.

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## CHAPTER VIII.

### A STRANGE BIRTH-DAY PRESENT.

ANNE was a very pleasant companion in a cab-drive through the streets of London, for she was a country girl whom Mrs. Ingram had taken into her service as school-room maid during their autumn visit to Lowestoft, and everything she saw was new to her. She thought a good deal of having a member of the Shoe-Black Brigade, in his red dress, pointed out to her, and was so lost in admiration of the Commissionaire, with his Crimean medal at his button-hole, on his bench before the Pantheon, that she quite forgot to tell the cabman, who had been engaged by Packer, to wait for her and Rose till they came out. When they were once inside among the stalls, Rose began to be a little anxious, for Anne saw so many things she wanted to look at everywhere, that a considerable time slipped by before they reached the end of the Pantheon, where the birds and fish were to be seen. Rose had, luckily, quite made up her mind what she had to do, but she could not convince Anne

that there was no use in asking the prices of watches, or ear-rings, or inlaid work-boxes, when she only intended to buy an aquarium. A clock in the building struck twelve just as they reached the conservatory, and now it was Anne's turn to be frightened, and to beg Miss Rose to make haste, for what would Mr. Packer say to her if she were not at home by five minutes to one, ready to attend to the school-room dinner, when visitors to the school-room were expected? Perhaps it was as well to be a little hurried; the dormice and the squirrels in their cages, and the dear, dear noisy birds, looked so tempting; and there was actually a knowing-faced monkey for sale, which Rose—with her head full of something Mr. Henderson had told in a late history lesson, of the use made of monkeys in ancient Egyptian households—might have deluded herself into thinking a desirable assistant for nurse and Packer, as well as an agreeable play-room mate, if Anne had given time for inclination to argue away reasonable scruples. Not being allowed to dally with temptation, she kept her attention steadily fixed on aquariums, and chose a handsome fresh-water one, well-stocked with live curiosities, which only cost five-and-twenty shillings, and was not too heavy to be carried home. She begged to carry it herself down the room, and only stopped at a toy-stall to buy the little piano. It cost four shillings, leaving one, which Rose determined to spend in various kinds of rocks and candies at the confectioner's stall, to make a dolls' feast for Lilly to preside over, and invite Lucy Fanshawe to see, in the afternoon. The judicious expenditure of this last shilling cost more time and thought than it had been necessary to give to the other twenty-nine. Anne got rather cross at last; and Rose determined not to ask anyone what o'clock it was as she



walked through the vestibule to the door, with his hands and arms laden with packages.

It had begun to snow while they had been in the Pantheon, large soft flakes were falling very fast, and the pavement and road were whitened already. Foot passengers were hurrying along, with umbrellas already turned into white domes over their heads. A beggar woman, with a little group of ragged children round her, at the foot of the Pantheon steps, had the appearance of snow figures; the Crimean hero had disappeared from his perch, conquered by the cold; and neither up nor down the street was there at the moment an empty cab to be seen.

"What are we to do, Miss Rose?" exclaimed Anne. "To think of that man, as Mr. Packer paid five shillings to, driving away without us! However are we to get back in time? and I did want to rub up them school-room spoons before Mr. Packer saw them, which he's sure to look them over, as your grandmamma and aunt are coming to dine in the school-room to-day."

"There's an omnibus stopping on the other side of the way," observed Rose. "I wonder where it's going to! Do you think, Anne, you could run across and see whether there is Bayswater on it, and ask the conductor which way it is going? I know the boys come home from school on wet days sometimes in a Bayswater omnibus, so perhaps we might do the same."

Anne, pleased with the suggestion, ran towards the omnibus, and Rose was left standing at the bottom of the Pantheon steps with all her purchases. It was fun to be alone in the whirlwind of snow, through which one could only see a little way—though, when a moment or two had passed, Rose began to be a little anxious lest Anne should get bewildered and forget to come

back for her. More and more people with umbrellas passed, but no Anne. Somebody was speaking to her. Rose turned round. It was the snowy beggar-woman, who had now come close, and was holding a shaking hand quite under Rose's hat, and mumbling something about the cold, and her poor little children wanting bread. If Rose had had any money left, she would most likely have given it, but her purse was again quite empty. She could only look round and say civilly, "I'm sorry, but I have nothing to give you."

At the sound of her voice, there was a rush and a howl among the group of ragged children whom the old woman was dragging after her; a little boy, whom she held with her left hand, broke from her grasp, rushed at Rose, and throwing his arms round her legs, burst out into a great cry: "Oh, oh, oh! Take me back to Rosie! Oh, oh, oh! I'm Teddy Marshall. I runned away going to school this morning, and she got me—oh, oh!—and stole my comforter and my cap; and I want—I want—I want to go back to Rosie and to sisters. Take me back, little lady, take me back!"

All at once, in a quarter of a minute it seemed, a little crowd had gathered round the Pantheon steps. The old woman clutched Teddy by his ragged frock, and asserted vehemently that he was her own precious little grandchild, who had taken a screaming fit with the cold, and did not know her, and that she must take him home and give him something warm to drink, to buy which she was sure some kind lady or gentleman in the crowd would give her sixpence, or he would die. Rose, in an agony at the idea of the frightened screaming child being dragged away from her, put down her purchases on the Pantheon steps, or gave them to one of the by-standers to hold for her—she never could

quite remember which of the two things she did—and threw both arms round Teddy to hold him fast.

“Yes indeed, he is Teddy Marshall; I do know him, and he is not that old woman’s grandchild, indeed he is not. Do let him stay with me,” she said, looking up earnestly in the face of a tall elderly gentleman, who, with a younger companion, had forced his way through the crowd of lookers-on to the centre of action.

“How do you come to know the child?” this gentleman asked.

“I saw him at the Home of the Sisters of Consolation.”

“Ah, I have heard of such a place,” remarked the younger man, who wore clerical costume. “And who are you, my dear child?”

“I am called Rose Ingram, sir.”

“Can it be the daughter of Professor Ingram, Science Lecturer at B—— College?” asked one gentleman of the other.

“Yes, I am,” said Rose.

“Well then, we know something of your father. What can we do for you? What do you wish to have done with that little ragged child who is clinging to you? His owner, by the way, seems to have slunk away out of sight since we spoke to you. Are you here alone?”

“We had better call a policeman,” put in the elder gentleman; “there ought surely to be one somewhere about, though of course never visible when wanted.”

At the word “policeman,” Teddy set up a louder howl than ever, and fastened himself with his teeth on to Rose’s dress as well as with both his hands, evidently resolved to make a desperate resistance before he allowed himself to be torn from his refuge.

Rose looked about her rather forlornly. It was still

snowing fast, but the crowd had thinned since the two gentlemen came up; there were not half-a-dozen people now, and no old woman to be seen anywhere; but there was Anne making her way up to her with a very flurried and horrified expression of face. "I have a servant with me—there she is!" Rose said to her new friends, pointing to Anne. "She left me to look for a Bayswater omnibus, but I suppose, as she has been so long away, that she could not see one. If we could get a cab, I think I would take Teddy Marshall home with me. I have several things to carry that I have been buying this morning. I put them down a minute ago. Oh dear me! where are they? My aquarium, and the little piano, and the packets of candies! I think I gave them to someone to hold for me while I was fighting for Teddy. Surely no one can have been so unkind as to run away with them in that minute! Oh dear me—do you think anyone would?"

"Look round! Do you see the person to whom you gave your purchases anywhere in the crowd? Point him out if you do," the elder gentleman advised.

Rose anxiously scanned one face after another among the by-standers, but memory told her nothing; and besides, what was of more importance in her eyes, all the hands were empty, and not a trace of her purchases to be seen anywhere. She would have to go home empty-handed herself, except for Teddy. What would they all think of her bringing such a strange live animal as Teddy to Lilly as a birth-day present! A policeman, who had strolled up while Rose's examination of the by-standers was going on, gave it as his opinion that the whole scene had been got up for the express purpose of stealing Rose's parcels, and that the only possible chance of ever getting any clue to the

thief, would be to take the little boy, who was no doubt connected with the old woman, to the Police Station, and see who would come to claim him. Rose, however, was firm in standing to her story; and the gentleman who knew the "Sisters of Consolation" by name, insisted on her being attended to.

"Do you happen to remember the name of the street where this Home you speak of is situated?" he asked.

"No." Rose only knew that it was a long narrow street, somewhere in the north of London and that it had taken them a long time to drive there. "But Aunt Rachel knows," she added eagerly, "and she is to be at our house to-day; so don't you think I had better take Teddy home? Aunt Rachel will carry him back to his own people before to-night, I know. I should not like poor Teddy to go away with a policeman, he is crying so dreadfully; and since I have lost all my purchases, I may as well have Teddy."

"It seems a wise and kind plan," Rose's champion declared. "Suppose you act upon it at once. Here is a cab, whose driver has just come up, attracted by the sight of a crowd and the chance of a job. Let me put you into it; and if you will give me your address I will call at your house in the course of the afternoon, and see if I can be of any further use in the matter."

Anne, who had hitherto been too bewildered to speak, now struck in hotly. "They must indeed hurry home—why, it must be long past one already—and whatever would everybody say? But as for taking that dirty screaming little beggar-boy with them in a cab, and for Miss Rose having lost all the things her mamma had sent her out expressly to buy—why, it was as much as her place was worth to go back to—and she was not going to do anything of the kind—she just

wondered at Miss Rose being so silly as to let herself be robbed and imposed upon so quietly ; for her part, she was determined to stay where she was, on the Pantheon steps, till somebody brought the aquarium back, or another as good, or the twenty-five shillings Miss Rose had paid for it not half an hour ago. For what was the use of policemen, she should like to know, or soldiers, or the Lord Mayor, or anything, if people were to be robbed without anyone's being punished for it ?”

Rose left Anne to argue out this point with the policeman, for meanwhile her friend had beckoned the cabman to draw up to the pavement, and gently disengaging Teddy's convulsed fingers from Rose's dress, he began to lift him into the cab, and to help Rose to follow. Rose gave him her father's address, which he transmitted to the cabman ; and the cab began to move slowly over the ground slippery with snow. In less than a minute they stopped, for Anne had thought better of her resolution, and was screaming to be let in ; and the kind gentleman had actually brought her up to the cab, and was trying to soothe her excitement.

“The best thing you can do now is to go home as fast as possible,” Rose heard him say to Anne as she mounted the steps. “The young lady's friends will be growing uneasy, and I have really nothing to do with how much or how little you are to blame for what has happened.”

Rose found, however, that she had, or was supposed to have, a great deal to do with it. Teddy left off crying the instant the cab began to move again. He was clearly an adept in the art of passing from extremities of woe to ecstatic bliss in a quarter of a minute. He wriggled to his knees on the cab seat, put his elbows on the window-sill, and flattening his

nose well against the glass, chuckled and laughed aloud with delight at the notion of having a ride in a cab wherever it was to take him. But Anne sat on the seat opposite Rose, and all through the long slow drive talked in a most distracting way about Packer and the school-room spoons, and about what nurse would say to the dirt on Teddy's arms and legs, and about the thirty shillings that Rose had just as good as throw away into the mud of the streets, and the likelihood there was of her losing her place for letting it happen. And as she talked, and the cab crawled slowly through the fast thickening snow, poor Rose felt more and more as if her heart was sinking down in her shoes. At home they would all be wondering what had become of her; and mamma, who had trusted her not to delay, would be looking out for her from the drawing-room window, and perhaps grandmamma, and Aunt Rachel, and Mrs. Fanshawe, and Lucy, would have arrived, and be waiting too. The children would perhaps all have assembled on the stairs, for the Fräulein was writing letters, and nurse was always late on birth-days—all eager for the anticipated present and expecting something more and more delightful the longer she stayed away. How surprised they would all be when she got out of the cab and lifted Teddy down—Teddy, looking more forlorn and ragamuffin than ever, without the comforter that had been wont to conceal something of his tatters and dirt. He certainly was a strange present to bring back in exchange for the two bright gold pieces mamma had entrusted her with. Rose thought with a little pang of papa's advice to mamma to consult her, and of his expectation that she would make a wise choice for all the others. Yet, had she made a mistake?—had she done anything wrong?—

ought she to have minded her own business, and let the beggar-woman drag Teddy from his refuge with her? Were the toys or Teddy best worth clinging to? If the present had been for herself alone, Rose would have had no difficulty in settling these questions; but what would the other people concerned say to them—what would be the verdict of the school-room community?

She had not arrived at any satisfactory conclusion on this point when at last the cab turned the corner that brought them into their own square, looking quite unlike itself in its new winter blanket—white, and pure and glittering, just for an hour or so. Rose glanced anxiously at the windows of the house as the cab drove up to the door. Ah, yes—they were all looking out. grandmamma's and Mrs. Fanshawe's caps at one window, mamma's pale face at another—children's heads everywhere, and actually Packer—no, papa himself, throwing the front-door wide, and coming down the snowy steps to meet her.

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## CHAPTER IX.

### OLD CLOTHES AND NEW.

"My dear child, you have made us all very anxious, and your mother quite ill."

It was so contrary to all Professor Ingram's habits to have wasted half an hour in the middle of the day in watching from the window, and now to be running down the steps to a cab-door without his hat, and with all the household looking on at him, that as soon as his first glance at Rose had assured him of her well-being,



a tone of reproach coming into his first question, "Where have you been, and what has kept you so long?" he continued a little sternly.

"Oh, papa, I could not help it, indeed—at least I think I could not," said poor Rose, a good deal frightened, and stammering a little.

"Well, get down and run into the house as quickly as you can, and set mamma's mind at ease by showing her you are not hurt;" and Professor Ingram took Rose's hand and hurried her across the little bit of front garden and up the snowy steps, without vouchsafing a second glance at, or giving a second thought to, Teddy, whom, if he perceived at all, he concluded to be an appendage to Anne, whom she was bound to look after.

"Go out and pay and dismiss the cab," he said, as soon as he entered the house, to Packer, who, with most of the other members of the household, had on one pretext or another come out into the hall. There was a general rush at Rose. Mamma reached her first.

"Oh, my darling, are not you almost frozen to death?" she said, taking Rose in her arms and bestowing a warm kiss on each of her cold frost-bitten cheeks. "Yes, indeed, you are dreadfully cold; come to the fire at once, my darling." Not a word about her own anxiety or tedious watching at the window, though it had made her almost ill; not a note of reproach in her voice, only care for Rose's comfort.

As Rose returned the kisses, she forgot all about Teddy for a moment in the rush of gratitude to dear mamma for being so kind. Of course nobody else could be quite as kind under the circumstances but just mamma. Luckily, her memory was refreshed in time by the clamour of children's voices that reached her ears next.

"What have you brought, Rose? What have you brought, Rose? Where are all the birth-day presents?"

Where indeed?

"Oh, mamma, I had forgotten! I must run back to the cab to bring in what I have brought here."

"Not through the snow again, my dear. Surely, whatever it is you have brought us, Packer and Anne can manage to carry it into the house between them."

"Oh, but I don't think he will follow them, he will be frightened. Do let me go and speak to him, please."

"A dog," shouted Lionel, clapping his hands in an ecstasy. "Hurrah! Rose has brought us a dog for Lilly's birth-day present. What fun! I hope it is a big one, and very fierce; won't nurse and the Fräulein be pleased and take to it—just!"

"My dear, I hope you have not done anything of the kind," said Mrs. Ingram, beginning to be agitated. "A dog! even your papa objects to dogs in London; and of all things in the world I have the greatest horror of a dog going mad and biting the babies. Why, what is that noise? I do believe that the creature is beginning to howl, and that Packer is angry about it already. Oh, Rose, what have you done; what have you brought us?"

Rose meanwhile had opened the front-door, which Packer had shut behind him, and disclosed to the eyes of the assembled household a vision of the cab still standing by the curb-stone, with Teddy on the top step violently kicking and striking Packer, who was trying somewhat roughly to lift him down, vociferating in a loud voice that he would not go nowhere with nobody but the little lady. "Where was the little lady. Oh, oh! She had promised to take him back to Rosie and Sisters, and he would not go nowhere with nobody else. Oh, oh, oh!"

How Rose wished she had never left him, but had had the presence of mind to bring him into the house at once, before he had committed the enormity of kicking Packer before the whole household. If Lione were sent to bed on Christmas Eve for that offence what could be hoped for Teddy?

"Oh, Aunt Rachel," she said, turning in despair for support to her aunt, who was looking on in as much surprise as anybody else, "Don't you know him? It's Teddy Marshall; the boy who sat by the fire at the Home one Saturday night. Oh, do say that you know him."

"My dear," answered Aunt Rachel, "I can't undertake to identify every little boy you may have seen. However, he may possibly know me by sight. I will go and see."

Teddy subsided at once, either at the sight of Aunt Rachel's face or the sound of her voice, and the next moment the whole party were assembled inside the hall with the door shut. Teddy stood in the middle of a circle of curious observers on the front-door mat, which Anne ostentatiously thrust under his dirty feet the instant he entered; and Rose drew near him, feeling that it devolved on her to account for so strange an apparition being there, and hoping so vehemently to be able to persuade them all to be kind to Teddy, that for a moment her throat ached too much for her to bring out a word.

In the silence, Packer had the first word, addressed to Professor Ingram, who, at the second opening of the front-door, had turned back from his study, which he had just reached, to inquire what was the matter.

"As far as I understand what 'as 'appened, sir," Packer began, respectfully, "Miss Hingram 'as been

robbed of some purchases she made this morning by an old woman who snatched the parcels out of her 'ands, while this little boy clung to 'er and 'eld 'er fast. The woman ran off with the goods, and left the boy behind 'er. A policeman who came up very properly proposed to take the child to the police station and keep 'im safe there till some one came to claim 'im, which would most likely 'ave led to the discovery of the perpetrators of the theft, sir; but Miss Hingram" (with a look of disgust at Rose) "preferred to bring the boy 'ere, sir; and that's 'im, sir, on the door-mat."

"Oh, Packer," cried Rose, with tears in her eyes, "how can you say such things? She did not snatch—nobody snatched—and Teddy Marshall had nothing at all to do with it."

"Hindeed, miss! 'ad not he?" in a civil tone of profound incredulity. "But," turning to Professor Ingram, "that is what 'as 'appened, sir, you'll find, as far as can be made out."

"Master Willie," struck in nurse in a shrill voice, "come and stand by me this instant, sir; I won't 'ave you touch that little boy on the door-mat. Come quite out of the way, I tell you, to the other side of the 'all. And you, too, Miss Tiny. There's no saying what he mayn't have got about 'im, coming out of places like that."

"Indeed, you need not be frightened, nurse," cried Rose, eagerly. "He can't be so very dirty; for I know he is always washed on Saturday nights, and this is only Tuesday—now, ain't you, Teddy," she added courageously putting her hand on Teddy's capless head to raise his face to view: a movement which called out an indignant "Well! Miss Rose, I never—" from nurse, and a visible shudder from Mrs. Ingram, but had

no effect whatever on Teddy, who, having seized of Rose's out-door jacket, was steadily engaged twisting off one of its bright buttons, sending occasional glances from the corners of his eyes at other curios in the hall meanwhile.

"I thought it as well to tell the cabman to wait a few minutes, sir," persisted Packer, still ignoring everybody present but Professor Ingram. "I thought it might be convenient, if you wished to have the cab taken at once to the nearest police station, as proposed at first, sir, and as is the most likely way of restoring him to his own friends."

"Mamma, mamma," cried Rose, in an agony. "He is a great deal colder than I am. Do look at his hands, and his red toes sticking out of his shoes, and he is dreadfully afraid of policemen, and I don't suppose he has had anything to eat for hours; and he is like a little Marshall, indeed. His mother is ill in the hospital, and Aunt Rachel visits. Papa, do feel how dreadfully his poor little blue hand is, if you ain't afraid of being like Packer."

Professor Ingram could not help smiling at the side-thrust at Packer, and, coming forward, actually did take the blue hand that was not busied on the button in his. "Poor wee chap," he said, looking at Teddy kindly. "My dear," turning to Mrs. Ingram, "can't the little lad, whether he is a thief or not, be taken down into the kitchen, and be warmed and comforted while we listen to Rose's explanation, and decide what to do with him?"

"The kitchen, my dear! did you say the kitchen?" said Mrs. Ingram, looking flurried; "but we are going to have an early dinner for grandmamma and Mrs. Fanshawe; and cook will be dishing up

and she *never* allows any strange person to come into the kitchen while she is dishing up. She would never get over it if I proposed such a thing to her."

"Then Packer had better call the cab," said the Professor, a little impatiently. "If there is no single place in this house where a poor child can be taken, for I suppose of course that you would object to his going into the nursery, I will drive with him myself to the ragged school in West Street; he will be taken in there and kindly treated till we can find his friends."

"And if it really is Teddy Marshall, as Rose supposes," put in Aunt Rachel, "there will be no difficulty in finding his friends. I can take him back to them any moment you like."

"But you are both in such a hurry," said Mrs. Ingram, plaintively. "I am sure I am the last person who would wish to turn a dear little child out of the house cold and hungry; only papa said the kitchen, and I know that is impossible; and I was thinking of my own room. Why, the poor little fellow must be about the same age as Willie; and Rose says his mother is ill, and I can see that he has a dreadful broken chilblain on one foot, that nurse had better attend to directly. She remembers what the doctor ordered for Lionel when he had a broken chilblain, the first year he went to school. A small liqueur glass of port wine twice a day, was one of the prescriptions. Packer can bring the wine whilst nurse bathes and dresses the foot; or stay" (seeing looks of strong disapprobation on the face of the two potentates) "perhaps I had better see to it all myself. There is a good fire in my room, Rachel; and I will take the child there out of the way of our children, for fear of infection,

and we will bathe him and dress him in some of Willie's old clothes; and then, perhaps, it might be safe to let him wait in the nursery till his friends can be told where he is, and come for him."

"So long as you don't rush into the opposite extreme, and tire yourself to death," said Professor Ingram, a little doubtfully.

"Let us hear Rose's account, and let her tell us what she knows about the child," suggested the elder Mrs. Ingram.

"Or let me question him and try what I can make out," said Aunt Rachel, kneeling down before Teddy, and turning up his face with her finger so as to give everyone a full view. "Now, my little man, tell us who you are, and whom you belong to."

"I'm Teddy Marshall, and I belongs to Rosie, and I wants to go back to her, I do." (Somewhat sulkily).

"And who is this?" pointing to Rose Ingram.

Teddy, briskly: "It's the young lady as 'as a bag at 'ome, and as give our Rosie a bright penny for me not to stand on my 'ed."

"Oh, Teddy have you got it with you?" cried Rose. "Do show it them if you have, and they'll believe us. Mamma and nurse and everybody knows my bright penny."

The request had a peculiar effect on Teddy. For a moment he seemed to be choking; and then there appeared from some recess in his cheek, or under his tongue, a penny—not very bright, certainly, now, but sufficiently unworn to show that it had been bright a little while ago. He wiped it on his dingy pinafore, and handed it to Rose with a grin. "I would not let 'er 'ave it. She got my comforter and my cap; but I would not let 'er 'ave my bright penny not for any-

thing, I wouldn't, so I hid it quick, as Big Ben—he taught me 'ow."

"I wish you would teach me how," cried Lionel, rapturously: "it's as good a conjuring trick as I ever saw in all my life. I just should like to know how to talk and scream with a penny in my mouth as well as you did."

"But you'll give me back my penny, won't you?" said Teddy, distrustfully eyeing the penny as it passed from Rose's hand to one and another of the children's with exclamations of "Yes, it is Rose's bright penny; that is where Lilly scratched it with a pin the first day Rose had it." "Oh, and that's where Lionel tried to burn a hole in it with a red-hot knitting needle!" "Yes, nurse! yes, mamma! it is Rose's bright penny."

"Though how the identification of the penny suffices for the identification of the boy I don't yet understand," observed Professor Ingram.

"It is all growing very clear to me, however," said Aunt Rachel; "for I believe I was present when the penny was given away. This little boy's sister Rose must be a girl whom our Rose kissed on the steps of the Children's Hospital, one Saturday night, when she was there with me. Is it not so, Rose? You told me she was your namesake then, I remember. But how in the world does the little fellow come to be under your charge to-day, miles and miles from his own home?"

"He says he ran away from his sisters going to school this morning, and an old woman called Turner got hold of him and stole some of his clothes, and took him out begging with her. They came to the Pantheon, and Teddy saw me, and ran to me and asked me to take care of him and bring him back to his Rosie. I



could not have let the bad old woman have him—could I, Aunt Rachel? could I, mamma? She tried to drag him away from me, and I put down my parcels, all the things I had bought at the Pantheon with your money, papa, on the steps or somewhere—I don't quite know what I did with them. I did not think of them—I could only think of holding Teddy fast, that the dreadful woman might not drag him away. Papa, was it right or was it wrong?" And Rose looked up anxiously into her father's face, with her eyes again rapidly filling with tears.

"Quite right, my dear child," he said, stooping down and kissing her tenderly on the forehead as he spoke; "quite right to cling at any cost to a more helpless creature than yourself who appealed to you for protection. Go on as you have begun to-day, Rose, having courage to be helpful in spite of appearances, and you will be such a woman as I should like you to be."

The Professor spoke loud, and everybody in the hall heard him—grandmamma, and Packer, and nurse, and old Mrs. Fanshawe, and Lucy. As Rose felt the colour rush over her face she did not know whether this was the happiest or the very hardest incident of the morning. Perhaps Lucy Fanshawe would make a joke afterwards of her father's grave speech, and how should she bear that? She could not help turning round to look at Lucy, who had pushed her way from behind her grandmamma to the front row since the exhibition of the bright penny. But though the eyes that met hers were very bright, it was not, as usual, with mockery and laughter, Rose could hardly believe the evidence of her own. Could it be the moisture in them that made her fancy that Lucy's eyes were full of tears?

"It strikes me," said Aunt Rachel, "that we ought not to waste any more time in talking. Something should be done at once about——"

"Getting the dear child whom Rose has saved something to eat, and something warm and clean to wear," interrupted Mrs. Ingram, eagerly.

"Yes, and what is perhaps of more consequence, about letting his mother know what has become of him. If he has been missing since morning, she is no doubt in great anxiety, and she is very ill."

"Poor thing, she must be in an agony," exclaimed Mrs. Ingram. "I should like to go and tell her myself that her child is safe. I shan't have a happy moment till she knows. How can we reach her quickest, Rachel?"

"We must send a telegram to the hospital—that cab of Packer's—it really is fortunate he did not let it drive away, for the snow is falling so thickly, the streets may be impassable in another hour. I will drive to the telegraph office and send a message to Mother Ursula that will make them happy about Teddy, and you had better, all of you, including Teddy, go to dinner, for I am afraid grandmamma and Mrs. Fanshawe must be feeling very faint."

Professor Ingram offered to accompany Aunt Rachel, and the party in the hall began to disperse.

It was certainly very kind of grandmamma, and of old Mrs. Fanshawe, not to make any remark on the long delay of dinner, or even to look disturbed about it in the very least, for neither of the old ladies was accustomed to have her convenience set aside. The younger Mrs. Ingram was beginning to be remorseful on their account, and to wonder again how she should dispose of Teddy, when nurse, on whom the production

of Rose's bright penny had made a great impression came forward to the rescue. She said Mrs. Ingrar had a deal better leave it all to her, and order dinner to be brought up into the school-room at once. She would see after the poor little boy's chilblain. Of course he was not a thief. *She* never would believe that of him, whatever anybody else did, now she had seen how carefully he had kept Miss Rose's penny, not spending it in sweet rubbish, as all the children she had ever known would have done, except dear Master Claude when he was in the nursery. And as for his head, now she came to look close at it, nurse pronounced that it was not so very much amiss but that a wash and a comb might make it safe for even Master Willie with his long curls to come near. The harangue ended with a benevolent glance towards Teddy, and an appeal in nurse's most coaxing nursery tone.

"Come away then with me, little dear, and he shall have a nice piece of hot roast chicken by-and-by."

Hot roast chicken, however, did not appeal to any experience of Teddy's, and in spite of all nurse's blandishments he stuck to his first resolution, of "not going nowhere with nobody but the little lady." The point had to be yielded at last, and Rose was allowed to take Teddy by the hand and lead him up-stairs to coax him into submitting to some preliminary washing and dressing arrangements, and to provide him with a plate of chicken and mashed potatoes, with promise of sweet pudding to follow, before she went herself to the day nursery to have her dress changed for the early dinner, now by no means early. Other people had nearly finished their meal when she appeared, but there was a place reserved for her between grandmamma and Mrs. Fanshawe. The latter was disposed to pity

her a great deal more than necessary for her long fast, and it was a little embarrassing. Mrs. Fanshawe would talk to grandmamma across Rose, all the time she was eating her dinner, about how very much she admired young people who were kind to the poor; and Grandmamma Ingram, who held strong opinions on the unadvisability of young people being made much of under any pretext, gave cut-the-matter-short answers in a dry tone, accompanied by injunctions to Rose to finish her chicken as quickly as possible, and not keep everybody waiting; which made Rose fear she was in disgrace in that quarter. That she was not became apparent, however, when dessert was put upon the table, for while everybody was drinking Lilly's health, grandmamma took an opportunity of saying that though she disapproved of the extravagantly expensive presents it was now the fashion to give children at Christmas and the New Year, and though she had meant to restrict herself to one of her usual useful presents on birth-days, of a new thimble or pair of scissors to a girl, or clasp-knife to a boy; she should this year, to show her approval of Rose's behaviour to Teddy, and to spare dear little Lilly and the other children disappointment, present the school-room party with the very same gifts that would have been received if Rose had brought her purchases back from the Pantheon instead of Teddy. Rose was called on to give an exact account of the contents of the parcels somebody ran off with, and when grandmamma heard of the aquarium, and the little piano, and the packets of candy, she could not help holding up her hands with astonishment, and shaking her head disapprovingly at papa, who, though he could not find time to join the early dinner party, had just looked into the school-room at that moment to

drink Lilly's good health, and take grandmamma and Aunt Rachel downstairs into the drawing-room. It led to a talk between grandmamma and Aunt Rachel and papa, about the very different sort of toys they used to have when they were young, and to anecdotes of papa's and Aunt Rachel's childhood, which delighted Rose, and made her wonder how it was she had thought papa such a very grave formidable person, as she had certainly considered him a few weeks ago. Lilly was told to thank everybody for drinking her health, and papa pretended to pity her very much for having to submit to such an ordeal, and said that to make up for it she might choose her own amusement for all the rest of the evening. Lilly did not take a moment to think, but decided at once that nothing would amuse her so much as to have Teddy to sit by her at dessert, and to take him up into the nursery afterwards and show him all the toys. Papa gave his consent before mamma had time to think of fears or objections, and Lionel and Lucy Fanshawe darted out of the room together to bring Teddy in. They were some time absent, and a great deal of noise and giggling was heard in the passage. Maggie went to the door to ascertain what was going on, and brought back word that Teddy was teaching Lionel to walk on his head, and that they were preparing to come into the room as two coach-wheels, a little one and a big one. Rose had some qualms of conscience as to whether her namesake would approve of Teddy's receiving such encouragement in his bad habits at their house, but the rest of the party applauded the performance quite rapturously when it came off, and old Mrs. Fanshawe laughed till the tears ran down her cheeks, and would have given Teddy a shilling on the spot, but Aunt Rachel would not let

her. Teddy looked as pretty as Clara, now that nurse had combed and brushed his thick curly hair into soft dark rings all round his head, and washed his face till the pink and white showed. There was a great deal of white and a very little pink (just where the fire had touched the cheeks) in the odd, shrewd little face; and grandmamma, as she pinched Teddy's thin cheeks, said she was sure that his mother did not know how to make porridge, but fed her children, as did all the feckless southern poor women, on dry cold bread and milkless tea. Mamma being disposed to excuse the mother, of whose anxiety she was constantly thinking, questioned Rose as the only person able to give information, and while Teddy sat on mamma's knee absorbed in almonds and raisins, Rose related what she knew of the history of the family as she had gathered it from her namesake on the stairs. She was not prepared for its making such an impression on her mother as she saw it did.

"Five children and a baby, did you say, my dear, and the mother obliged to separate herself from her little ones since November, and the father not the sort of man she can rely on to protect them in her absence! Ah, that is what I chiefly pity the poor mother for, to be weak and ill herself, and not to be able to look to her husband for support." And the younger Mrs. Ingram glanced towards the Professor as she spoke, who was just at the moment leaving the room with grandmamma leaning on his arm. "My dear Rose, I can't imagine how she bears her life. I *do* pity her, poor thing; I can quite see the sort of person she is, brought up in a quiet country place like Monkton, perhaps, where I lived till I married, and then having to come into the whirl of London. Ah, hers must indeed

be a life of trial! And I think you said that one of the children died after they came to live in London?"

"Yes, Harry; he was the eldest, older than Rose."

"I wonder whether it was of scarlet fever," said Mrs. Ingram, thoughtfully; and then Rose remembered to have heard that a little brother of her own had died of scarlet fever the year after her father and mother came to live in London, and that mamma's great dread of infection, and nervous horror of any one of the children going into a strange house, dated from that loss. The other children had slipped away to the play-room while mamma and Rose talked, and now a deputation returned to say that a game of General Post was going on in the nursery, and that Rose's presence and Teddy's were called for.

"Yes, go, my dear," mamma said, kissing Rose affectionately; "we have had a very nice talk together, and I am glad to know all about the Marshalls. I should perhaps have been nervous if I had known about your going into that lodging-house at the time, but I begin to think I ought to put aside my fears sometimes. If you had not made friends with Teddy he would not have run to you to-day, and that other mother might now be suffering such an agony of anxiety as I cannot bear to think of."

Teddy was a great success in the nursery, and did more to make the holiday afternoon pass brilliantly than could have been effected by the little piano or the packet of sweetmeats. He was not in the least shy, and though his ill-luck came out conspicuously in all the games, and he was always the one to be caught, or to be thrown down, if there was a chance of anyone's being thrown down, and though he managed, in spite of all nurse's precautions, to fall foul of the nursery

fire-guard, in Blind-man's-buff, and bruise his forehead against its hard edge, he took his misfortunes as such capital jokes, and was so rapturously merry over everything that happened, that all the children were enchanted with him, and declared if only they might keep Teddy always they would not care to have an aquarium or any other pet animal.

"Rose was right after all," they said; "she had brought a capital plaything and pet home with her, if only they might have him for their own."

Lucy Fanshawe was the most forward of all in paying attention to Teddy, and won Rose's heart over again by her good-nature. When she and Rose were standing out of a game, with nothing particular to do for a few minutes, they fell into conversation that took a graver turn than was usual with Lucy Fanshawe.

"You looked at me when your papa kissed you in the hall," Lucy began. "You thought I should laugh, I know, and all the time I was so nearly crying; I would not have had anyone see me but you for all the world."

"But why?" asked Rose.

"I don't mind telling you, because I believe you are really good-natured, and would not remind one of things at wrong times. I should not like often to be reminded of this, because it really is *so* doleful. Did I ever tell you anything about my papa?"

"No; but I know that you remember him. I suppose when you heard my papa speak so kindly to me, it brought the thought of yours back, and hurt you. Was that it?"

"It is worse than that. What your papa said to you put me in mind of something very different that my papa once said to me. It was when he was ill, just a



month before he died; but of course I did not know he was going to die. I had brought him up a pudding from the kitchen. I always liked to wait on him. I was not so bad as ever to forget anything I was told I might do for him himself. But that day he could not eat his pudding; he took a mouthful, and smiled at me, and said it was very good, but that it hurt him too much to swallow, and that it was a pity such a delicious pudding should be wasted on a person who could not enjoy it, and that he should like me to take it just as it was, nice and hot, to a little boy in the village who had hurt his foot badly, and who lived close to the rectory gate. I put on my hat to go, but at the house door I met some little friends of mine who had brought me a tame rabbit for a present. I just put the dish down on the doorstep while I looked at the rabbit, and then we talked and played with it for a few minutes, and at last went into the orchard to find a place to keep it in, and the time slipped on till nearly tea-time: you know how time does slip on without one's perceiving when anything nice is going on. When my friends left me, I went back to the front of the house, and found that a strange dog had got into the garden, and knocked the dish over and eaten all the custard pudding. When I went to see papa the last thing that night, he asked me how little Willie Brown had liked his pudding; and when I told him just what had happened, he looked gravely at me, and said, 'I am disappointed, Lucy darling.' The worst of it all is that I never had an opportunity of talking to papa being alone with him after that day. He was taken much worse in the night, and grandmamma and Aunt Mary came to be with him, and they would hardly let me stay five minutes in the room, or speak a word to

papa; they pretended it was bad for him and me, and never would let me have a chance of waiting on him; they took all that on themselves. You would not believe how often I think about it, Rose; and when I look out for amusement and make myself giddy, it generally is just to keep myself from getting quite too horridly mopy. There seems so little use in my taking pains with lessons or things now, or trying to improve myself in any way, for grandmamma always says she cares for nothing hardly but my keeping strong and well; and whatever I do, and whatever pains I take, I shall never get a word from papa that will undo that 'I am disappointed, Lucy darling.' Nothing I do can please *him* now."

"But are you sure?" said Rose, hesitatingly. "Don't you think that he knows about you in some way? If you were really trying, I think he would know: your guardian angel might tell him about you."

"But I heard Aunt Mary say the other day that it was all nonsense about guardian angels, and that nobody thought about them now."

"I think Aunt Rachel does. I will ask her to tell me what she really thinks."

"I wish you would, and tell me," said Lucy, eagerly. "If I had anyone to look after, or I thought it signified very much to anyone what I did, it would make such a difference. Grandmamma is very kind, but then she fidgets so about health and nothing else, and I can see I am a great plague to her, Aunt Mary is always telling me so. I thought once that you were going to be very fond of me, Rose, but you left off."

Rose was called away to take part in a game before she had had time for half the protestations and promises that came to her lips, and just as she was

released, Aunt Rachel appeared in the play-room to say that Stephen had come with the carriage to take grandmamma and herself back to Russell Square, and that as Stephen had had the horses roughed, and reported that the streets were now passable, grandmamma proposed to take Teddy and Rose in the carriage with them. She herself would get out at her own house, but the rest of the party were to be driven to the Home. Rose would thus have the pleasure of restoring Teddy to his friends herself, and would afterwards return with Aunt Rachel to Russell Square for the night. The next morning grandmamma promised to take her to the Pantheon, to buy another aquarium, and hoped to bring her back by twelve o'clock in possession of all her purchases. If Rose had not been going too, there would certainly have been a great scene with Teddy, before he could have been got out of the play-room, for he was in no sort of a hurry to leave his comfortable quarters, and the playmates who were making such a fuss over him. However, when he saw Rose putting on her hat, his anxiety to be restored to his Rosie revived, and he declared himself ready to abide by his first resolution, and "go with the little lady and nobody else."

Nurse, who certainly was, as Mrs. Ingram always said, a wonderful woman, able to turn her hand to anything in an emergency, and capable of performing feats that trenched upon magic, had contrived (nobody knew how or when) to have Teddy's old clothes not only washed and ironed, but substantially mended, and made up into a neat bundle, with sundry additional old socks and flannels of Master Willie's, for Teddy to take home with him; the suit he was wearing now being obviously only fit for gala occasions in the "Models."

While Teddy was being fitted with a cap of Willie's and a comforter, to replace those the old woman stole, a frantic overhauling and tumbling about of toys went on at the toy cupboard ; all the nursery children down to Tiny being extremely anxious to present Teddy with something to take away with him, and determined to have his own opinion as to what he preferred. Nurse's efforts to keep his head still while she fitted the cap were constantly rendered ineffectual by appeals in shrill voices of: "Would you like to take this drum and fife, Teddy dear?" or, "Don't you think you had better take this little old soldier as well as the baggage waggon? You may if you like."

Teddy was not disposed to refuse anything, and his taste when an alternative was put before him was invariably the most bulky article ; so that but for Aunt Rachel's interference, grandmamma would have run the risk of being suffocated in the carriage under a mountain of toys.

There were limits to Stephen's patience when he was required to keep the horses standing on a cold day, and at last Packer himself toiled up to the height of the nursery with a remonstrance: "The carriage could wait no longer, and would have to drive off without Miss Rose if she was not ready."

That was how Packer put it ; he did not choose to have it supposed that old Mrs. Ingram, and the horses, and Stephen, were waiting all this time for Teddy Marshall and his toys.

In this extremity a hasty selection had to be made. Teddy secured a headless wooden horse under one arm and a musical cart under the other, and Willie ran after him with the drum and fife and the little old soldier, while Rose followed in the rear with the bundle

of clothes, and a flaxen-haired doll in a pink silk dress that Lilly made up her mind to part with at the very last minute, and thrust into Rose's arms with a whispered message that it was to be given with her love to Clara. This put it into Rose's head to stop for an instant before her own little book-case in the corner: since so many presents were flying about, her namesake must have something, something she would really like—'The Book of Golden Deeds.' How Rosie would like that, and the stories were not long enough to take up too much of her time, or make her forget things. Rose slipped it out of its place and into her pocket just as Aunt Rachel called back to her to make haste; and as grandmamma actually was waiting in the hall, they got into the carriage without more delay, and with only a few objections on grandmamma's part to the unreasonable number of packages that had to be stowed in.

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## CHAPTER X.

### THAT OTHER MOTHER.

WHEN Rose Marshall got within a few paces of the hospital door, she saw, to her surprise, Reuben, the telegraph boy, coming down the steep steps. It was not a usual time for him to be in that neighbourhood, and there was something in his face that made her set off running. He too began to run, either to meet her or because he had already delayed a little on his errand. As they passed each other he drew up for a quarter of a minute to nod and say, "It's all right; I brought a telegram. They'll tell you within." And when Rose had stumbled

up the steps, panting and breathless, she saw Mother Ursula in the reception-room, with a paper in her hand.

"Oh, Mother!" she cried out; "is it about Teddy? Is it to say where he is, and that he is safe?"

"Yes, my poor child," said Mother Ursula, kindly. "Here is a message from Miss Ingram, and it seems she has Teddy in her safe keeping. Her little niece found him wandering about in Oxford Street, and took him to her own home, and they will bring him back to-night, if possible, if not, early to-morrow morning. Now it is just four o'clock, and your mother is growing anxious; take the telegram in your hand, Rose, and go and tell her about it yourself."

Rose ran up with a very joyful face to her mother's bedside. The telegram, however, was not quite the same thing to poor Mrs. Marshall as the sight of Teddy himself; and it was very difficult at first for Rose to make her understand all that had happened, and convince her that all was right. There was enough distress to show Rose how great her agony would have been if she had had to hear of Teddy's long absence from home that snowy day, and no news of his whereabouts could have been given to her. Mother Ursula, however, was at hand to soothe and explain, and exercise a little wise authority over her nervous patient; and in a little while Mrs. Marshall was satisfied, and grew calm, and was able to enjoy the privilege of keeping her children with her till tea-time. Even after that hour Rosie was allowed to remain sitting like a mouse by her mother's side, holding her hand, and helping her to listen for the sound of carriage-wheels, and for rings at the bell. Sometimes Mrs. Marshall got into tolerable spirits, and laughed a little over the notion of their

expecting Teddy to come home in a carriage and pair; and sometimes she relapsed into fears, or into being doleful over the shame of a child of hers being seen in such an untidy state as Teddy was sure to have put himself into. Miss Ingram would never know what a pretty little chap he was when he was clean, nor how like he could look to Harry in the Sunday suit of long ago, that would not have been in rags if Mrs. Marshall's poor weak fingers could have worked to keep it together. At last—for after all, the carriage-wheels made no noise in the snow—the ward door opened, and Rose Ingram appeared at the opening, leading in Teddy clean and spruce, and rosier, and altogether in better condition than he had ever looked since they came to live in London. There must have been a good deal of agitation in Mrs. Marshall's mind, for when at the joyful sight she sprang up in bed, and held out her arms, it was "Harry! Harry!" she called out, instead of Teddy. The sight of the outstretched arms was, however, quite enough to set Teddy tearing down the ward to get into them; and a great rapture of hugging and kissing, and a little crying on Mrs. Marshall's part, followed. The sight of a new suit of clothes, and a loving inspection of the mended old ones, proved of great service to Mrs. Marshall in recalling her thoughts to practical matters, and giving a happy turn to her excitement. While Rose Marshall turned Teddy round and round that his mother, lying back exhausted on her pillow, might inspect every thread of his new attire; and while the two of them shook out the contents of the bundle, and exchanged looks of congratulation over every patch, and settled that one of the extra flannel petticoats Nurse Lewis had put in should be for Susie, and that Polly might wear one of the pairs of socks, though

they would be too large for her, Rose Ingram stood aside, looking on, and getting a good many new ideas into her head.

It may perhaps seem strange that some of them solved for her a little difficulty in her school work that had been troubling her more or less for a week past. The Professor of the literature class she attended had desired his pupils to write a theme on "money," and Rose had been in despair about what she should say on such a dry topic. It was odd to come to a hospital to get help to do one's lessons, but here quite unsought for the help was; for thoughts came pouring into her mind so fast that her only fear was she should never be able to crowd them all into her paper, or to find good enough words to put them into, so as to make them look as clear to other people as they did to her just now. She saw, what the lecturer had tried to explain and she had not entered into before, that pounds and shillings and pence are only signs, tokens that have meant very different things at different times, and that now mean different things to different people. Why, only this morning she had had two pieces of gold in her hand, which only meant to her some toys that would for a few weeks give a little extra amusement to four or five children, who were already busy and happy enough, and to-night she was learning what that sum of money would have meant to the sick woman on the bed there. Should she try to put some of these quick crowding thoughts into the history of a shilling or a sovereign, instead of keeping to the usual form of theme which she never could make anything but dull and patchy? The idea was so pleasant, that Rose could not help giving a skip across the room to welcome it, and then Mrs. Marshall caught sight of her and



turned from the mended clothes to take her by the hand and pour out such thanks and blessings as drove for the time everything but embarrassment and shyness out of Rose's head. She had not done anything to deserve such thanks; they made her feel ashamed and humbled, and yet it was not a painful shame; there was a glow of joy and of thankfulness underneath that brought tears, sweet not bitter tears into her eyes. She understood this feeling of thankfulness and to whom it was due a little later in the evening, when Teddy had been carried off to be shown to Blind Ben and his father, and put to bed in the "Models," and when the White Rose and she sat on the staircase together for a few minutes before they parted. Rose Marshall then gave the history of that day and told of her thoughts in the church, and the verse of the hymn that had comforted her, and they compared notes on what they had each been doing.

"You see the Good Shepherd *did* take care of Teddy," Rose Marshall said, "better even than I dared to hope. He took him to you and made you so kind to him. Oh, I am glad it was you."

That was the thought that stayed with Rose Ingram till long after she was in bed at grandmamma's house, and the light in her room had been put out. The Good Shepherd had brought Teddy to her, He had let her do a little bit of work for Him that day, trusted her for a little while with the care of one of His lambs. It was a joyful, beautiful thought, but it had a side of awe to it too. If she had not been ready, if work should come again, and through cowardice, or selfishness or unreadiness of any kind, she should turn away from it and disappoint Him! The thought of His watchfulness over all, of every opportunity, every call,

small as well as great, to kindness and self-denial being directly of His sending, made life very full of hope and joy indeed—but awful too. Rose found fit expression at last for the great need of Divine help, which these thoughts brought home to her in the words of a collect which she had learned by heart a few Sundays before without paying much attention to its meaning, but which she now found supplied her with exactly what she wanted to say:—"Lord, we beseech Thee mercifully to receive the prayers of Thy people that call upon Thee, and grant that they may both perceive and know what things they ought to do, and also may have grace and power faithfully to fulfil the same through Jesus Christ our Lord."

When Rose Ingram came back the next morning all the holiday aspect of things had left the house, lessons and German speaking were going on in the school-room, and as the music-master was expected in five minutes, the Fräulein directed her to go upstairs at once and take off her out-door things, and be ready to take the first lesson. The aquarium had been left downstairs, and was not (so the Fräulein decreed) to be seen by the children till after lesson hours.

Rose was very glad to find Maggie seated by the nursery fire, excused from attendance in the school-room on account of her sore throat. It was a real relief, while throwing off her jacket and unlacing her boots, to be able to pour out to Maggie some of the news with which she was overflowing.

"It was even nicer than I expected, Maggie," she began as fast as the words could be brought out. "You'll hardly believe it, but I took Teddy up to his mother myself in the ward—such a pale woman—but you should have seen how delighted she was with

Teddy's new—I mean with Willie's old clothes. I should not have thought that old clothes could possibly have made any one so happy: and then she undid the bundle and counted the socks over and over again, and then lay back on her pillow smiling at them, and she spied out nurse's patches in a minute, and said that many and many a night she had lain there thinking of the patches that needed to be put into those clothes of Teddy's, and that nurse had done just exactly what she would have done herself, if her poor weak hands would have let her; for what she cares for above everything, she says, is to keep her children decent. I really think she made more fuss over the patches in the real old clothes than over the old new ones. She said they had been such good wearing clothes, and that she had bought them in the country for Harry, and made them up again herself for Teddy before she began to be ill, and it had so gone to her heart to think they were being frittered away for want of mending, she had hardly known how to bear it. I must tell all that to nurse. 'Frittered away' is just one of nurse's own words, isn't it? I stayed talking to Mrs. Marshall ever so long, and I saw the little sick children in their cots all round the room."

"And you slept at grandmamma's?"

"Yes, in our favourite Red room, with a fire so comfortable, and grandmamma so kind. But, oh! the best part is to come. Do you know that this is S. Matthias's Day?"

"Well, what then! what does that signify?"

"Yes, I know *we* don't make any difference, but some people do. I went with Aunt Rachel this morning to Rose's school, and after a little bit of lessons, all the children went to church, and they sang such a

ful hymn marching round the church all together.  
an—

‘Daily, daily sing the praises  
Of the city God hath made’—

only remember the chorus perfectly, because we  
hat over and over, and the preacher spoke about  
is sermon, and I have been thinking it over ever  
to tell Lucy Fanshawe. I think she will like it  
sh as I do.”

icy Fanshawe! the idea of her liking anything  
ermon. Why, Rose, are you going to change  
and have her for your friend? Florence will  
u fickle indeed if you do.”

ever mind that now. I want to tell you about  
rmon quick, for fear I should forget it, and I  
only time to talk while I unlace this last boot  
d my jacket. The verse in the hymn the preacher  
about was—

‘O that I had wings of angels  
Here to spread and heavenward fly:  
I would seek the gates of Zion,  
Far beyond the starry sky.’

d the children always liked singing those words,  
marching round the church on Saints’ days, but  
nted them to think what they meant when they  
to have wings of angels. He said we ought to  
about the Saints pointing the way, and our  
an angels at our sides (that is what I want to  
icy Fanshawe), but that it would not do to be  
aking pictures, and only singing about having  
we must do the kind of things that make our  
of angels grow, and prepare us to ‘heavenward  
d he said these things were little daily duties;

saying our prayers, and attending at church, and conquering our faults, such as crossness, and greediness, and idleness. He said that every real prayer, and every victory over a fault, and every good piece of work done for love of God, was like a new feather in our wings of angels, and that as the wings grew they would bear us up nearer and nearer to God continually. Was not it nice and plain? So nice and odd too, is not it, to think that there may be all that great and wonderful good, in just speaking German, for instance, if one does it because one is told and ought. There, now, I have come to the last button—I must not speak another English word; I must run down and have the piano open, and the music spread out, as he likes to see it, before Mr. Gosse comes, or it will not be a good beginning, and I shall not be doing what I was told to do in the sermon.”

Mrs. Ingram sent for Rose in the course of the afternoon, and they had a long talk about the Marshalls; and when the Professor came into the drawing-room half an hour before dinner-time, he found his wife sitting alone, and gazing into the fire with a very grave, absorbed face. He came behind her and put his hand on her shoulder.

“Well, my love, what is the matter now? What new anxiety are you brooding over? Have Packer and nurse, one or both, given warning? or have you discovered the cook in fresh nefarious transactions with the rag and bone merchant? or which of the babies is it that has got a cold in its head?”

Mrs. Ingram turned up a face half-tearful and half-smiling to answer.

“Yes,” she said, “I was thinking of anxieties, but for once, Alexander, not of my own, which somenow

o-night look smaller than I have ever thought them before. I was thinking of that other mother Rose has been telling me about, and realising what a heavy burden she has to bear, with far worse health than mine, and many delicate children, and a husband who is no support to her. I was pitying her for that. The husband, from what I can gather, appears to be a good-hearted man, fond of his wife and children, and a clever man, too; he listens to his little daughter reading *Rasselas*, but he is idle and self-indulgent. I was wishing that he could see you, and that you could talk to him a little."

"I, my love; but I should not know what to say to him—I am not used to talking to people of his class. It is not my way nor my business; I am not a clergyman."

"No, but you are a husband and a father, and you have a sickly nervous wife who throws the chief burden of the family on you, and you take it without complaint. I can't help thinking that if that other father knew about you—what you do for us, and how little rest or indulgence you ever allow yourself—it would make an impression on him."

"He probably would not understand that my sort of work cost any effort; he would look on me as a bloated aristocrat rolling in luxury."

"Not if he saw enough to know how your time is spent. He would see that you give all the comforts and luxuries to us, and keep only the work for yourself. I suppose it's quite impossible for people in different ranks of life to be really intimate with each other; but I can't help thinking it would be a great help to that other father, and make him see his own conduct in a new light, if he could get near enough to you in a natural way, to know what you think about your duties to your wife

and children, and how you manage to fulfil them. I know it's impossible—it was only a wish!"

Professor Ingram stood silent for a minute and stirred the fire thoughtfully.

"I don't think, however, that it ought to be impossible," he said. "I doubt whether it can be a right state of things when the outward circumstances of life make a gulf so wide that community in the grand human relationships cannot bridge it over. Pray what is the name and occupation of this 'other father,' about whose conduct you and Rose seem resolved to concern yourselves? I certainly don't promise to seek him out, but circumstances might throw us together."

Mrs. Ingram gave all the information she had gathered from Rose, and the Professor wrote the address clearly in his memorandum book before he went up-stairs to dress for dinner. He was at that time engaged in delivering a course of lectures on social questions at the Royal Institution, and his dressing-room wall over the washing-stand was ornamented with papers containing memoranda and lists of figures, which he kept thus before his eyes that he might carry on the chain of reasoning he was engaged upon at every spare moment. To-day, though his eyes fell on these papers, his thoughts took another direction. He was not just then in the mood to think of his fellow-creatures in masses represented by figures. The working classes about whose position and future prospects he had been discoursing that day, had become individualised to him as they had never been before in the person of that "other father," with a sickly wife and delicate children, on whose ill-regulated life it might be his duty to seek to exercise a more immediate influence than could be hoped from social changes.

## CHAPTER XI.

JUNO MONETA.

WHEN one's mind is full of a subject, it is curious how frequently little circumstances fall out to bring it before one in unexpected ways, and how fresh lights upon it pour in from every book we take up, or conversation we listen to ; that is to say, if we know how to think, and listen, and read to advantage. Rose Ingram, during the last month or so, had made such a large stride in her education as to have reached the point, never reached at all by some folk, when she could look out for, and gladly take in, mental food that was not forced upon her in the form of lessons ; and this question of the theme on 'Money' furnished her with her first experience of the fact alluded to. One thing after another happened to suggest thoughts for the theme, and it really seemed as if everyone conspired to cause pleasant rays of light to play round the dull subject, till it grew beautiful and as interesting as a fairy tale. The evening after her visit to the Home was one of Professor Ingram's open evenings, when the friends of the family and his colleagues at the college dropped in for an hour or two's conversation after dinner. The elder children were always required to appear as usual on these evenings, for Mrs. Ingram thought it good for their manners to be accustomed early to the constraints of society, but no one was expected to notice them, and they need not listen to the conversation that went on unless they liked. They had hitherto voted the notion of *liking* to listen simply



ridiculous. Lionel even pronounced it mean, a sort of unworthy pandering to the unreasonableness of elder which it became the young to stand out against stiffly. "As if," he said, "it was not enough for these old fellows to have all the day to pound at us with their dull stuff and just because they're such idiots as to like to go on grinding when they might stop, we're to give in to listening to them. They won't catch me. Not if I know it."

Rose could not help having a vague suspicion that she was acting the part of a sycophant, when, in obedience to a look of invitation from Mrs. Ingram, she left the shadowy corner where Lionel was provoking her to giggle, and seated herself on the sofa by her mother's side, close to a group of gentlemen who were examining a bracelet, a gift from Professor Ingram to her mother, which she had just taken from her arm to show them. It was composed of old Greek silver coins, linked together, and as it passed from hand to hand remarks on the beauty and age of the coins were exchanged. At first these sounded very dull and incomprehensible. Lionel's nonsense was better worth listening to, and Rose seemed likely to get nothing but the satisfaction of having obeyed a look of her mother's to set against the odium she felt she was incurring from her own kind. But as she went on listening, the subject seemed to open out; a little light here, a little light there, till she found herself busy packing away the information gained in her memory, in easy words of her own.

Those old coins were real money, then, yet they had been looked on as sacred things at first, and could only be struck in the temples. How odd! It would have been thought sacrilege once for a man's head to have been struck on a coin. The first person who dared to

have his likeness upon a piece of money was Alexander the Great, and that was because his courtiers flattered him and made him believe he was a god. Stamped money was a thing sacred to gods and goddesses then at first, and must always have a Divine image impressed upon it; and at first it was to the beautiful goddess of the evening star, worshipped as love, or to the blue-eyed goddess of wisdom that the gold and the silver were dedicated. Wisdom and love—why, it was a sort of parable. Did the ancient people think about it, Rose wondered, when they were spending their money? And then her attention was fixed again, as something further was said about the long journeys and voyages that the early traders made. From Babylon, when it was still a city of walls mountain-high, and palaces roofed with silver and gold: from forests of spices and fragrant woods further east: across burning deserts in slow-paced caravans towards the Tyre that Solomon visited: in small ships, tossing on treacherous seas, till they gained the harbour of some fair Greek town, and saw gleaming above it the white marble palace of Aphrodite, the sailors' patron goddess, where they would repair first of all to pay their tribute silver, as a thank-offering for the guidance that had brought them so far through so many perils. The picture of all this came before Rose's eyes, and one of the gentlemen, as he turned to give the bracelet to Mrs. Ingram, was struck with the eager intelligent expression of her face.

"You take an interest in antiquities I see, my dear," he said, kindly.

"No; oh no, I know nothing at all about them," cried Rose, suddenly overwhelmed with false shame at the notion of the disgust Lionel would feel for her if

she acknowledged such a taste. "I—I was only listening a little. I only thought it odd that these things—such a beautiful thing as this (touching a large coin with a head of Athene on it) should ever have been money, like shillings and half-crowns, and that it should have been made in a temple."

"I am glad you can see that it is a beautiful thing," said the gentleman, smiling. "And as to its being made in a temple—do you happen to know how money comes to be called money?"

"No, indeed I don't; I did not know there was a reason—I thought it was just its common name."

"Ah, but what is that? This common name has all the history we have been talking about this evening wrapped up in it. The word comes from the title of the goddess Juno Moneta (Juno the admonisher), in whose temples the Roman coins were struck, and it is an existing proof of what surprised you, that in the beginning coined silver was something that had been dedicated."

"Oh, thank you," said Rose, eagerly; "I am glad you told me that. It seems to make the other things nearer the past things I mean, our having the name still."

"Right, my little girl," said Professor Ingram, who had been listening for the last minute, and who now put his hand on Rose's head with a more approving pressure than any *précédence* ticket had ever won her before. "You have got hold of a right notion there. It is one of the words that are like telescopes, through which one can look at past times and bring them near. I am glad you have found it out."

"I don't think I did, papa," said Rose, honestly. "I did not mean all you have said just now; I did not think of the word being a telescope."—"But I can see

it is," she thought to herself; "and here is another idea for my theme. Oh dear, how easy it is growing! I only hope I shall be able to get the right words, and find time to write them all down properly. I do wish I could sometimes be half-an-hour alone, so that I might work without the others interrupting me every minute, and thinking it odd if I write a line more than I need."

The kind pressure on her head had given Rose a great deal of courage, and when a minute or two later the signal for going to bed came, and she wished her father good-night, she lingered by his side, for he was not talking to anyone just then, and said, "Papa, would you mind if, for one or two mornings, I were to come down into your study for half-an-hour before breakfast when Claude goes there to do his Greek? I only want to sit at the little desk by the side window, and I won't make the least little noise, not so much as a screech with a slate pencil."

The Professor hoped not indeed: he was, to tell the truth, a little startled at the request, for he valued the quiet of his morning hours beyond anything in the day, and it had cost him a struggle when he had felt it right to have his eldest son with him at that time. The prospect of his beloved study becoming a public resort for any one of his children who took a fancy to be studious was a little appalling; and yet was he to spend himself day and night in trimming and brightening the lamp of learning for the benefit of strangers, and not be careful to cherish the flame when it burned for his own? Silently the small sacrifice was made, and Rose from that moment was taken a step nearer to her father's heart, and passed out from being the mere child whom other people were to be paid to tend carefully,

into an individual charge of his own, his future companion and friend.

"Very well, my dear," he said; "you may come if you like; that is to say, if your coming will not interfere with other more important morning duties."

"It sha'n't, indeed, papa," said Rose, earnestly. "I will take the same time for everything; it shall only be that I will get up half-an-hour earlier before the fire is lighted; and nurse herself says it is not necessary for me to have a fire to dress by, because I am——"

"A Lancaster Rose," said the Professor, pinching her pink cheek. "Ah well, let us see how long the far from early rising will last. If you really do prefer study to comfort, I shall begin to think there may be some use in you."

The frost was continuing late into the year, and the cold strengthening with the lengthening days, and it cost Rose something of a struggle to jump up half-an-hour earlier than usual, and wash and dress in the cold with only such assistance as could be got from Nurse Lewis by running across the passage to the night nursery, where she slept with the three little ones, and back again to her own room. But the effort was overpaid by the satisfaction of being first in the study and of venturing to stir and pile up the fire, which was not burning very brightly, and to straighten the cushions of her father's chair, and blow the dust gently from his papers and place a clean quill pen by his writing-cup. Then she drew up the blinds to let in all the light there was, and settled herself in her distant corner, and had written the first sentence of her theme before her father and Claude appeared. The Professor did not notice her little arrangements for his comfort, but as he looked across his writing-table and nodded a silent

morning greeting to Rose in her nook by the window, he thought that the room looked brighter than usual and he came to the conclusion that the presence of a Lancaster Rose, blooming quietly in a distant corner of his study, would be no hindrance to his work, but rather something refreshing to rest his eyes on when he chanced to look up from the columns of figures and abstruse signs he was engaged upon. The morning's sun crept into the room through the frosted window-panes, and the three heads continued to be bent over their papers. Rose's pen moved quickly, for she had thought out all she wanted to say the night before, and the words came more easily than she had expected. She began by expressing the thought her father had suggested about the word money being a telescope through which one could look at distant things and bring them near; and then she related the fancied history of a shilling, tracing the silver of which it was made back to a coin with the image of Athene on it, which had been struck in a temple at Athens, and which, after buying many things in the hands of successive owners at Athens, and Alexandria, and Carthage and Rome, came into the possession of an early Christian, and was melted down by him into a lump of pure silver again, from his dislike to carry the image of a heathen goddess about with him. It was dug up from under the ruins of an ancient house in Rome by a Jew in the Middle Ages, found its way to Edward the First's mint, and was sent out among the first pieces of silver, with a cross on the reverse side, that owned rims; went on the last Crusade, slipped from a crusader's pouch into a crevice in the ground in the Holy Land, and after a long interval of repose, and sundry other findings, and losings, and smeltings, and recoinings, found itself a

Victoria shilling, and was surprised at the different amount of pleasure and service its purchasing qualities represented to different owners; the silver retaining all the time, under its various forms, the consciousness of the beautiful image of Wisdom, and of the sign of the cross that had once been impressed upon it, and testing the purposes to which it was put by these standards. Of course this history, in Rose's hands, could not with all diligence be compressed into one or two mornings' work; but she did not weary of her early rising, and before the day arrived when the themes had to be given in, the Professor had grown so accustomed to see her in her place by the window that he felt quite sorry when he found she was preparing to carry her writing-case and little inkstand away with her when the school-room breakfast-bell rang.

"Are you not coming here again?" he asked, stopping her before she reached the door. "You need not be afraid of coming; I like to see your desk on the side-table all day, and I shall miss you in the morning if you don't come now. You seem to have made the fire burn brighter since you came, for Claude and I have not needed to grumble at the cold as much as usual this week, and, though I have said nothing hitherto, I have found out that clean pens and blotting-paper don't get on my desk by accident, and that they are useful. I shall always look for them now."

"Oh, papa, how good of you! I thought I was only to come till I had finished my theme for Mr. Henderson; but if I might always do my English lessons here, I really think I could *do* them, you know, instead of just scratching through, as one must when one has to scramble one's English in at odds and ends of time between the French, and music, and dancing, and German. *I should* like it."

"Let me see what you have got there—ten pages of letter paper. Does Mr. Henderson allow you to send in such long themes?"

"Not generally; but this is an extra theme, for which we have had a long time given us. He chose the subject for the first class, and then he said we middle ones might do it if we liked; and he is going to give a prize for once. I think it is a coin, a bit of Persian money, very old, that he had shown to the girls in his first class at one of their lectures; but, of course, we middle ones have nothing to do with that."

"Well, I will just glance through what you have written, to see whether you really are fit to study alone, or whether it would be waste of time. I can't say much for the handwriting, Rose; I should call that a scramble."

"Yes, I know; but my fingers were rather cold."

"Ah, yes, indeed I should think so; you were sitting in that far corner by the draughty window. I ought to have thought of that before—why did you perch yourself there?"

"I thought I ought to keep quite out of your way and Claude's, and I did not mind the cold so very much."

A curious look came over the Professor's face at this; but now he had turned the second leaf of Rose's manuscript, and was becoming absorbed in what he read. Rose had not bargained for her bold experiment in essay writing coming under his notice, and she stood watching his face as he rapidly turned the leaves with a good deal of trepidation. Was he biting his lips to save himself from laughing—he turns back and reads a page slowly through a second time—there must be some terrible mistake there, and yet surely he does not



look displeased. Rose continued in doubt till the last sentence was read, and her father raised his eyes to her face, and then she could not mistake the smile of approval which she had seen once or twice reward some of Claude's work, and envied him for winning. How odd that it should come for her! But her father did not praise her—it was not the Professor's way to praise people for successful work, only he could not help the smile coming. He folded the sheets and gave them back into her hand.

"There are some droll mistakes and anachronisms, my dear, and it is rather long; yet I think Mr. Henderson will be pleased, and, certainly, if you can do work like that you ought not to have to scramble for time to do it in. I will make a place for you at my own table by the fire, and shall expect you every morning. I shall see what you are doing, and, perhaps, we might find a spare half-hour sometimes for a little Natural History or Physics with Claude; should you like that?"

"I don't know about the things themselves, papa, because I have not tried them, and Lionel says that Physics are dreadfully stuffy; but I do like, oh, ever so much, that you should let me do them with you; I shall feel like Claude, almost as if——"

"Well, go on."

"Papa, I was going to say, as if you cared for me as much as you care for Claude.

The Professor drew her on to his knee, and kissed her gravely on the forehead. "My dear child, don't you know that I care for all my children, and love them dearly and all alike?"

"Yes, papa," said Rose, "I do know that in a sort of way, of course; but when you talk to me and teach me

things that you like yourself, then I *feel* that you care for me, and know about me, and it is very nice." The Professor kissed her again, and let her go. He was not a man of many words, except on his favourite topics, but he was not so engrossed in these but that thoughts from quite opposite regions were welcomed and entertained when they came to him; and, strange as it may seem, his little daughter's words had suggested to him a train of meditation that employed him during the rest of his hour of quiet.

Was not her experience towards him, the experience of souls towards their Heavenly Father when He teaches them, through struggles, and effort, and pain, the higher things of the spiritual life? The lessons themselves may not be welcome at first; they may cost too much effort to learn, but does there not ever come with them, the fuller understanding of the Father's personal love to the individual soul, which differs from the general belief in His love for all His creatures, by growing ever sweeter and more intimate as the mind and will of the Father is revealed and the closer fellowship attained to? Would it not be well, taking a leaf out of the child's heart, that is near to the kingdom of heaven, to welcome all hard lessons with joy, as tokens of personal love and discriminating favour?

Rose found that breakfast was half over when she got upstairs, and she was received with a great deal of curious questioning.

"What could she have found to talk to papa about?"

"Well, you are an idiot," pronounced Lionel, "to have let papa get hold of you and entrap you into the study of a morning. Why, I tremble in my shoes every time he speaks to me, for fear he should invite me. The other evening, as we were coming down to tea, I

heard him asking Claude if he thought I wanted more time to prepare my lessons, or if I was inclined to take up a new subject. Did not I turn round and cut up to the attics, and dodge about in the dark till I hoped he'd forgotten all about me. I did not think you'd have been such a sheep, Rose, as to poke yourself into the lion's den of your own accord; but I shall not pity you now, whatever lot of work you get imposed upon you."

"Rose does not need to be pitied," said Florence in a low voice, and in German. "She gets all the help: other people work as hard, and it does them no good. Rose is everybody's favourite now. Mamma's since ever so long, and Aunt Rachel's always, and now papa is taking her up."

"What does it signify?" said good-natured, lazy Maggie. "I don't see either that it does Rose any good; it only brings her trouble. The other day, when nurse was ill, and mamma had to go out to a dinner-party, she sent Rose to sit in the night-nursery till the little ones were asleep, because she trusted her more than Anne; and we'd just settled to a delightful game of Flower Loto, and Rose missed it all. And I am sure no one need envy her getting up in the dark to go to papa. For my part, I'd rather not be a favourite, but do as I like; favourites are always said to be horrid in books, though I'm sure Rose isn't horrid."

"I should not mind what anybody said, or anything I had to do, if it was of any use," said Florence, not addressing anyone in particular, but speaking down into a book that, contrary to all rules, she was holding open on her lap under the table. She had been working at her theme for the last fortnight as diligently as Rose, and taking only spare moments and odds and ends of

to work in; but then Florence had long since blished her right to her own odds and ends of time, no one in the house any longer thought it worth e to make any claim upon them.

he themes had to be given in that afternoon, and Fräulein allowed a few minutes' grace and English ng after breakfast to Mr. Henderson's three pupils e they folded their manuscripts and wrote the oes neatly on the outside.

aggie confessed to having nothing to fold. "I n to write," she said, showing a sheet of paper one page half-filled, "but I soon got tired; and, e are not obliged to do anything this time, I ed. I began, 'Money is generally made of gold silver and copper, but it might just as well be s or anything else. It does not really matter her people have a great deal of money or very . Corn is the only thing that matters, because s when he could turn everything into gold had ears, and nearly starved, and the Spaniards were he same when they had conquered America.' I o far as that, and I thought it was rather nice; I was intending to put in nurse's story about a t in Wales who starved himself to death, for my ration, but I broke the point of my pencil, and de looked over my shoulder and laughed, and ether I thought I might as well give it up. Do e look what you are writing for your motto, Rose. do you put that curious sort of F at the begin- ? What does it mean?"

t is a Runic letter like the Runes in the Magic , and it stands for money. The sentence I am ag now is the saying that belonged to the letter, ey breeds discord among brethren; a wolf is bred

up in a wood.' I read it in a book that lay open on the table in the study, and I thought it would do nicely for my motto."

"The last part of the sentence is nonsense," objected Florence.

"No; I think it means that powerful things grow up in the dark from little beginnings, and that partly suits the theme. It was that bit made me choose the saying for my motto; and after all, you know, the mottoes are only written outside instead of our names, to distinguish the papers; for all the themes are to be sent together, that we middle-class girls may seem to have a chance of the prize, though of course we have not really."

"No, I suppose not," said Florence with a sigh, and an affectionate glance at her own neatly-folded paper. "The first-class girls are so big, and some of them so clever, there's no use in our thinking of the prize."

But Florence did think of it, and for once in her life sat with her German exercise book before her for the best part of the morning, hardly making any advance in her work. Instead of the printed sentences a vision rose before her eyes of the crowded class-room, and Mr. Henderson at his desk reading out her motto and calling on its owner to come forward and take the prize. No one would see her rise from her back seat, for everybody would be looking at the front benches, and expecting one of the first-class girls, with smart hats and turned-up hair, to rise and come forward. The other students would perhaps not see her till she was close to the desk, and then what a start of surprise there would be! "The third little Ingram! the plain one of the four Ingrams." She had heard herself described so a few days ago, with a very unchildlike

pang of pain ; by-and-by, perhaps, it would be the clever one, the one who always did best in the class.

Florence had often been present at the yearly distribution of medals and prizes at the school her brothers attended, and she had seen Claude go up again and again, and heard whispers of astonishment among the spectators, that such a little fellow should carry off all the honours over his seniors' heads, and the success and praise had seemed to her very sweet. If she could once have a taste of the same triumph, she fancied she should be happy for the rest of her life, and should be able to bear without discomfort the snubs and teasing and little marks of unpopularity which her uppishness and love of interfering brought upon her from her class-mates and brothers and sisters. One could bear to know one was a little disliked, she thought, if one was envied too. She could never be popular, like Rose, or admired for her beauty, like Lilly ; but it would be something to be acknowledged the cleverest of the sisterhood, and she thought she had a right to that distinction at least. Having settled this point with herself, she was the less disposed to receive meekly the Fräulein's reproof for idleness when she brought up her work for correction at twelve o'clock, but stood the picture of gloomy sullenness while the Fräulein pointed out careless mistakes, and expressed her disappointment at such a performance from Florence. If it had been Maggie or Lilly, or even Rose, the Fräulein confessed she should have been less surprised, but when Florence could do so much better, it was very disappointing to find her imitating the others in their careless habits. It was not what was expected of her.

"No," thought Florence, "that is just what is so

unfair. She knows I'm the cleverest; but I'm kept down, and made to give up to the two stupid elders all the same, and then I'm scolded when for once I don't do my work best. It's horrid to be neither the eldest nor the youngest, but just an ugly middle one whom nobody likes."

The poor child took the discontented temper out with her on her walk, and could not understand what the others found so very delightful in meeting Mrs. Fanshawe and Lucy at the end of the square, and being invited to accompany them to a nurseryman's in the neighbourhood, where Mrs. Fanshawe had business; nor why Rose and Maggie should go into such stupid ecstasies of joy, because they found they could buy a pot of dwarf tulips for fourpence, and were able to muster the necessary coppers from their jacket pockets. They talked going home of presenting the tulips to the Fräulein, to stand on her work-table, because it was known that she was fond of tulips; "And then," said Lilly, "we can all see and smell them, and I dare say she will let us water them in turn, so they'll be as good as our own, and we shall have the pleasure of making a present too." Florence wondered how they could go on talking about such a trifle so long. She did not want to make the Fräulein a present, and she did not believe that the others liked her any better than she did, or so well. They grumbled a great deal more about her strictness as to the German speaking, and were only in a good humour with her this morning because they had thought of making her a present. It was by that fickle, backwards and forwards way, that Rose imposed on people, and passed for being so very good-natured. Florence chose to believe that there was hypocrisy in Rose's frequent

little attentions to the Fräulein, and while brooding over imaginary wrong-doing, let herself grow crosser and crosser. As they were mounting the stairs, on their return from their walk, they were stopped on the second landing, and called into the drawing-room to see grandmamma, who had come in for a few minutes on her way from somewhere else. Grandmamma did not usually make remarks on the children's looks, but to-day the contrast of Florence's dull face, among so many smiling ones, struck her.

"Florence does not do you so much credit as the rest of the party," she observed in a low tone to the younger Mrs. Ingram. "I hope the Fräulein is not working her too hard; a little girl of her age has no business to come back from her walk with that dull, bored look on her face."

Mrs. Ingram's anxieties were up in arms in a moment; and nurse, who had brought Tiny downstairs, and was standing near enough to overhear the whisper, put in her word.

"She had noticed herself how tired Miss Florence looked when she came up from the school-room before she went out—tired and out of sorts like—so that she could hardly keep from crying when Master Willie shot at her with his pop-gun."

"Ah, yes," cried Mrs. Ingram, "the poor dear child! I know so well the state my head is in, when I can't bear that pop-gun of darling Willie's; and I dare say the good Fräulein, who has nerves of iron herself, has been finding fault with her, while her poor head was racked. Thank you, dear grandmamma, for drawing my attention to her. I will think of something to do for her."

The result of Mrs. Ingram's thought was, that she



appeared in the school-room after dinner, and with many gentle apologies to the Fräulein for interfering made known her wish that Florence should be excused attending the literature class that afternoon, and should come down into the drawing-room and sit with her while her sisters were away.

"It will be a nice change for you, darling, for think you look a little unwell," she said, putting her soft white hand against Florence's sulky face. "Lady Dunallan is coming this afternoon, and she always asks to see one of you school-room children when she calls."

"But oh, mamma!" exclaimed Maggie; "Lady Dunallan won't care to see Florence. It's Rose and Lilly she always asks for. She never takes any notice of Florence, never. I've observed it."

So had Florence; but Maggie need not, she thought have been so eager to proclaim the fact to everyone. Under the influence of mamma's kind touch, the evil temper was passing away, and she was just going to assure mamma cheerfully that she felt quite well, and could go to her class as usual, but now she changed her mind. If it was true that she had a less share of favour than other people, why should she miss a chance of being petted and made much of, even though it did come to her on slightly false pretences? Yet Florence was too honest a child not to feel uncomfortable under the anxious looks that mamma turned on her when she came into the drawing-room, and settled herself slowly and languidly with her work-box on a stool in the window-recess, a long way from mamma's sofa. She knew it was ill-temper and not weariness that made her choose to sit by herself instead of chatting with mamma as any of the others would have done. She knew she could shake it off and be bright if she chose.

but she would not make the effort. Willie, and Trottie, and Tiny came down while nurse had her dinner, and Florence sat on looking out of the window into the dull square and occasionally putting a stitch into her kettle-holder, but never offering to help mamma to amuse them. Willie made an assault at her with his pop-gun, but mamma called him off.

"I leave you to yourself, dearest," she said, gently, "because I see you are a little tired to-day, and quiet is good for you. I like quiet myself."

But mamma did not get it while the little ones were with her; for Willie was in boisterous spirits, and Trottie bent on exercising his new accomplishment of stamping about the room, and falling down and needing to be picked up again every two or three minutes. Rose would have had them all round her, and made up a play in which she would have been as merry as the babies, and mamma would have enjoyed looking on. Florence wondered why she could not do the same, and sat half pitying, half hating herself, for the ill humour that kept her miserable and helpless when she might have been useful and happy. She thought it was only the comfort of one afternoon her discontent was robbing her of, and did not know how many other temptations, this one yielded to, would bring in its train. After the children had returned to the nursery, afternoon visitors began to flock in, and Florence drew herself as far as possible out of sight to escape observation; but she began to feel dull and longed for something to turn her thoughts in a pleasanter direction. The table, on which lay the drawing-room books the children were allowed to read, stood at the other end of the long room, but the sides of the window recess were furnished with small book-cases, fitted with prettily-bound volumes. The

lower shelf held illustrated volumes of Shakespeare these Florence was allowed to turn over; on the upper shelf stood a row of standard novels, which an understood order forbade the school-room girls to touch. Florence had read the titles on their backs many a time, for the recess had long been her favorite drawing-room sulking place, and one day, long ago, when she had been told to put the book-case tidy, she had opened a volume as she was restoring it to place, and had read a sentence or two on the second page. It seemed to be something interesting about a clever little girl, who, like herself, was not a particular favourite with anyone, and who went one cold winter day into an inner drawing-room and took a book. Florence had often wondered since how the tale ran on, and whether the little girl got into trouble for boldness, and whether the grown-up people in the house grew kinder to her after awhile. She had not forgotten the outside of the book, bright red with black lines, and 'Jane Eyre' printed in gold letters on the back. Since it was about a child, this must be a book that children could understand, and it must have slipped into the forbidden row by mistake. Florence looked round; two stout old ladies had just come in, having drawn their chairs in front of mamma's; they were already deep in "cook stories;" they always stayed a long time when they came, and their "cook stories" were not funny, like Aunt Judy's, but tedious to listen to. Never again, Florence thought, should she have such a good opportunity of finding out what was the next thing that happened to Jane Eyre after she had hidden behind the curtain; and if mamma asked what she was reading, she would tell the truth when the ladies were gone. It did not seem as if the

could be much harm. Florence took down the book, opened it cautiously in her lap, and began to read, and the interest of the story absorbed her entirely. She had meant only to turn a few pages and find out that one thing; but every page suggested a new subject of anxiety that must be satisfied. She felt as if she had got out of herself, into a new world of deep satisfying interest, more real than the one she had left, and the only bit of herself that remained was an underlying dread, lest anything should come to shatter the spell, and bring her back to the everyday life she had escaped from.

"Florence," mamma's voice called at last; "here is Lady Dunallan; come and shake hands with her."

Florence started violently, pushed the book hastily back into its place, and came forward, feeling quite dazed, almost as if she had had a great fall and been stunned by it. She could not get up a smile or a civil answer, when Lady Dunallan took her limp hand and good-naturedly asked one or two matter-of-course questions about her lessons and classes. She was still feeling as if she were Jane Eyre, just arriving at her new school, and to have other ideas thrust upon her was a great plague.

"Florence is not quite well to-day, we think," mamma said in a tone of apology for Florence's gruff, short answers. "That is why I am keeping her with me this afternoon. The school hours are rather long for her perhaps."

"I should have sent her up into the nursery, and made her skip for an hour, instead of letting her sit and read," said Lady Dunallan, who being a very old friend and relative of Mrs. Ingram's, did not scruple to speak her mind. "The book element is a great

deal too strong in this house, and it will make you a very dull boys and girls if you don't take care. I say the same thing to my great-nieces when I come into their school-room and find, instead of skipping-rope and battledore and shuttlecock, the girls huddled round the fire reading novels. I am not at all surprised that though I have several namesakes among my numerous god-daughters, I have only one Lancaster Rose. Where is she to-day? I hope she is not turning into a premature grown-up novel-reading young lady."

"No, oh dear, no," exclaimed Mrs. Ingram emphatically. "My husband quite agrees with you in disliking novel-reading for children. He likes lessons to be lessons and play to be play, and the story-books are given out quite sparingly. We can't help having books of all kinds about in this house, but the girls know quite well that they are trusted not to open any tempting looking ones without express permission. It is a point of honour among us. Florence was looking at pictures just now, not reading. She knows which are the forbidden shelves and would not transgress, I am confident."

"I will speak presently," Florence thought, "not just now while Lady Dunallan is looking at me, but when she has gone I certainly think I will tell mamma. Yet I do so want to know how that story goes on that the little girl has grown up, and if I tell I shall be obliged to promise not to touch it again. If Lady Dunallan stays till after I am called to tea I will give myself the chance of one more look at the book before I tell. It shall depend on that, for I can't really speak till I am alone with mamma."

Florence had the opportunity for which she had gained with her conscience, but, being half-hearted

her resolve, hesitated till she lost it. Professor Ingram came into the drawing-room just as Lady Dunallan rose to take leave, and detained her a minute to tell her of her god-daughter's studious fit, and of the pleasant surprise he had had that morning in reading her essay.

"It was a very crude, funny performance, of course," he said, "and I could hardly help laughing while I read, but I confess it pleased me particularly. It was so genuine and thoughtful. I could not have believed, unless I had had proof of it, that so much thought could have come out of that little head. Claude's compositions take me by surprise sometimes, too; but I did not expect to find that we had another incipient genius among our flock."

Lady Dunallan shook her head. "Take care what you are about," she said. "Don't spoil my flower by planting her in a hot-bed of competition and forced intellectuality. Don't make her too clever."

"But it is not only in her studies that Rose has made such a start forward lately," Mrs. Ingram interposed fondly; "she is coming out in all sorts of ways. I would not praise her to anyone but you, but as you are her godmother I must tell you that she is becoming quite a comfort to me. She has found out many little ways of helping me that I should never have expected from her. I don't know what gave the impulse unless it was a visit to some poor people with Aunt Rachel that seems to have set her thinking about the use children may be to their elders; but her devotion to me has come like a sweet surprise and refreshment just when I was feeling to want it."

The tears came into Mrs. Ingram's eyes, and Lady Dunallan stooped and kissed her.

"My dear, you must try and keep up your spirit. I fear I have stayed too long and tired you, for you are looking very wan. I should have liked to have seen my Lancaster Rose, but I won't wait any longer. I will look in again soon to inquire the fate of the essay, and I shall bring something with me as a supplementary prize that will perhaps counteract the book fever a little. Don't say anything, however, for my plan is not quite matured; it has only flashed into my head this minute."

Professor Ingram went downstairs to put Lady Dunallan into her carriage, and Florence was left alone with her mother. She had been a good deal bewildered with all this talk about Rose. It is always a little perplexing to young people to hear conversation about themselves among their elders not intended for their ears, for they seldom quite understand it. Florence could not see that Rose had been doing anything lately to deserve so much praise, and the jealous temper to which she had been giving way took fresh offence. Mamma was lying back on the sofa very tired, but with a happy smile on her face that came to Florence felt sure, from thoughts of Rose; it would be very hard to have to disturb her to confess a fault that proved her so inferior to her sister. Florence hesitated and hesitated, and the Professor's step was heard reascending the stairs.

"You had better run off and get ready for tea, Florence dear," mamma said. "Papa likes to be alone with me at this hour, and I think I hear the Fräulein's knock at the front door now."

Florence walked slowly to the school-room, half-glad half-sorry that she had not spoken. Behind her uncomfortable thoughts there lay the bright region of the

story, and she soon determined to let herself get back there, and so escape from self-accusation and discontent.

Her sisters had a great deal to tell her about the giving in of the essays, Mr. Henderson, and Lucy Fanshawe, and they chatted incessantly all tea-time, but Florence scarcely heard a word. She was going over and over every incident of the story, as far as she had read, and wondering about the end. She did not say to herself in so many words that she would look out for opportunities of repeating her disobedience before she confessed it, but she dwelt on the pleasure she had had, and prepared herself to find the next temptation overwhelming when it came.

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## CHAPTER XII.

### THE ALPACA UMBRELLA GIRL.

THE decision about the essays was put off for a fortnight. A great many of the compositions besides Rose's proved to be lengthy, and Mr. Henderson told his pupils that he meant to read them all over carefully, and take time to judge of their respective merits. "The prize itself," he said, "was a small affair, and he did not usually give prizes, but as he had suggested the writing of these themes, and his pupils had responded so pleasantly to the suggestion, he would give them full consideration, and make them tests of progress and attention." This little harangue occasioned a good deal of flutter and excitement among the young ladies of both classes, who were assembled together in the largest class-room to hear it. The elder girls lingered after



their lecture was over, to discuss each other's chance of success, and the younger ones drew apart and lamented the little possibility there was of their exertions being rewarded.

"There is no chance, of course, for any of us," someone said in Florence's hearing, "unless perhaps for one of the Ingrams. Mr. Henderson knows mamma, and I heard him say to her one day, that some of the Ingrams were very clever."

"He could not mean Rose, for till quite lately she was always getting into disgrace for giggling; and Maggie, I am sure, is stupid enough; and, as for Florence——"

But here some one observed Florence's neighbourhood, and gave the speaker a nudge, and the sentence ended. There had been enough, however, to stimulate Florence's hopes, and to induce her to give all the thoughts she could spare from speculating on the end of 'Jane Eyre,' to dreaming of the pleasure it would be to bring home a prize. Rose thought less about it, partly because the work her father gave her to do in the morning required more attention than she had ever given to work before, and partly because, by dint of great care to avoid forfeits in the school-room, she had at length amassed a sufficient sum of money to buy the black-leather bag long since recommended by Maggie, and was proceeding to exercise her ingenuity in ways of filling it. A great deal of rubbish got in at first, and it threatened to be more fit for pretence use in games of Desert Island, than a receptacle of useful presents for anyone. By degrees, however, discrimination came, and many odds and ends of "thinking times," such as running-up-and-down-stairs times, and dressing times, and sewing times, and practising-easy-bits-of-music time:

which Rose would once have given to silly little dreams about herself, her good looks, her new dresses, and her chances of small pleasures, were occupied now in inventing ingenious plans for sealing-waxing old dolls' heads firmly on their shoulders, mending old boxes, whistles, and whips, or coaxing nurse into giving lining and tape enough to enable her to turn four torn dolls' frocks into a cape for Polly Marshall. The weather changed during this fortnight, too, the frost broke, and spring seemed to come all at once, bringing soft airs and wafts of flower scents into the Ingrams' school-room. The walks were prolonged sometimes so far as to take the school-room party to a bit of waste ground not quite built over yet, where the girls gathered dusty daisies, not however wanting crimson tips; and once found, at the foot of a dust-heap, a miraculous yellow buttercup, which Rose brought home, and insisted on pinning into her father's coat in the evening, when he was going out to a dinner-party, and which was, he said, the first flower he had worn since he married. A good many privileges came to the school-room children with the finer weather. Mrs. Ingram's fears of colds and sore-throats being relaxed, they were less closely watched, and, when school hours were over, had liberty to roam about the house, and make homes for themselves in odd corners; light closets, where boxes and brooms were kept, or twisty nooks on the garret stairs, which for no particular reason that the grown-ups could discover were voted more agreeable places for study and play than any room in the house. One source of happiness, which on looking back Rose believed all the former springs of her life had brought her, was however sadly missing that year. Mrs. Ingram did not throw off any of her ailments with the returning warm weather, or

take up any of the active habits she had laid down, one by one, when the cold set in. Rose watched for the usual little changes, and when they did not come, first wondered, and then grew a little anxious. Surely there was a great difference in mamma since last year. Last year she had gone herself to choose their spring jackets and hats, and on coming home had seen them all tried on in the day nursery with great interest, and had even snatched up Trotty and carried him in her arms down to the study, to make papa admire him in his white felt hat and blue feather. This year Aunt Rachel bought all the things (not nearly such pretty ones), and when they were tried on, mamma had the children brought to her, one by one, as she lay on the sofa, that she might see how the new purchases suited, and even with that she was so tired before it came to Trotty's turn, that she could hardly look at him. After that day Rose ventured to break the silence of the morning greetings, by asking her father: "Has mamma had a good night?" The first time she said this, Professor Ingram started and looked keenly and sorrowfully at her, as much as to say: "Is it so bad then, that you have found it out too?" but afterwards Rose thought he liked her to ask him, and they sometimes had quite long discussions, about how this or that little thing that might have been too much for mamma could be avoided another day. And after one of these talks, Professor Ingram would brighten up a little, and settle to his work with a less anxious face. With so many things to think of, it was not surprising that Rose should have few conjectures to spare, as to whether her essay would be praised or not, or that she should astonish Florence when the day for the decision came, by remarking carelessly—

"Oh, by the way, we are all to go into the big classroom to-day, with the old girls. Don't you like it? We shall see Gertrude and Emma Moncrieff, Lady Dunallan's nieces, and I hope one of them will get the prize, don't you?"

"Why should we wish one of them to get it?" cried Florence. "I am sure they hardly ever take any notice of us. They are such very grown-up girls and always seem to be thinking how old they are, and that we are not worth speaking to."

"Well, but they *are* nearly quite grown up, you know, and have longer dresses and more hair than any one else, and they are the only girls in the first class whose names we know. That was why I wished one of them to get the prize; though, now I think of

I believe I had rather it came to the reddish-haired girl in the shabby brown hat, who sat at the end of the bench on the day we were there. I noticed that she had cotton gloves, and brought a very ugly old alpaca umbrella into the room with her. One of the Moncrieffs, in passing, swept the umbrella down with her dress, and looked at it, and left it on the floor, and the brown-hatted girl turned as red as fire and went and picked it up. You may depend upon it she is clever, and an orphan, and high-spirited, and very poor, and I think she is almost certain to get the prize. I shall watch and expect to see her rise and walk to Henderson's desk when the motto is read out."

"But you know nothing about her, and you do give such odd contradictory reasons for wishing and expecting things," said Florence, crossly. "I wish you would not say anything more about it."

Florence had not eaten any breakfast that morning, and had worked herself into a state of expectation that

made it difficult for her to keep her temper, and Rose skipped away from her and joined Maggie, with whom she discussed the last addition to the bag up to the moment of their entrance into the class-room. There was no reason why they should not chatter to-day, she pleaded to the Fräulein, for they had no preparation to think over. There was to be no lecture to-day; the reading of the two best essays aloud and commenting on them would, Mr. Henderson had said, fill up all the time.

"There are the Moncrieffs," cried Rose, when they were seated in the class-room. "Oh, what pretty new spring hats and dresses they have; and there is the alpaca umbrella girl, in the same old velvet hat, very dusty, but she has a nice clever sort of face. Do look at her, Maggie; I am sure she expects the prize, for see, she does not turn her head, now Mr. Henderson has come in, and is walking to his desk. She stands up stiffly and goes on pinching the ends of her fingers. That is what I should do if I were very anxious about anything, and my heart were beating very quickly. Well, she'll know in a minute or two more, and I hope it will be right for her."

Florence, though she was anxious, and her heart was beating quickly, had turned her head and seen that Mr. Henderson was carrying two thickish rolls of paper in his hand, and that one of them was blueish-lined paper such as the Fräulein always gave them to write their compositions on. To be sure, several people might use the same sort of paper, but its familiar look brought unreasonable certainty to Florence's mind. She did not think of Rose; she thought only of herself, and through the few preliminary remarks Mr. Henderson spoke held herself ready to start up.

He began by praising all the essays a little, but said he had had no difficulty in picking out the two best. He had, however, hesitated long between these two, and chosen at last the one that appeared to him the most original. It was not the most correct nor altogether the best written of the two, but it had more of the writer's own thoughts in it, and less of what had been taken directly from books, and also it was the most interesting. He would now, he said, proceed to read both essays aloud, putting the successful one last, and he believed that most of his auditors would come to the same conclusion that he had arrived at.

Here Mr. Henderson took up the white roll of paper and read aloud a composition to which Rose listened admiringly, and of which Florence did not hear a word.

"Is it not good?" Rose whispered at the close to Lucy Fanshawe. "I am sure I did not know before all that about buying and selling, and remunerative and unremunerative labour and standards. How good the other one must be to be better than that. Why how odd! it begins just like mine. I said that at the beginning of my essay."

Rose's chattering tongue was silenced after that, and she sat upright in her place, looking only at her hands that lay still in her lap while the rest of the reading went on.

Lucy Fanshawe wondered what had turned her so grave all of a sudden, till Maggie, who sat next to her on the other side, squeezed her hand tightly and whispered,—

"That's Rose's essay Mr. Henderson is reading. Hers is the best of all. Oh, are you not glad?"

Florence swallowed with an effort a great lump that rose in her throat, and turned to look at Rose. She

had raised her eyes at that moment and was listening attentively to the lecturer, who had paused at the end of the first page to remark upon the derivation of the word money, and the comparison of the word to a telescope, by which distant times were brought near. He liked a thoughtful remark such as this, he said, better than information collected from books.

"Ah, but the thought was not my own, I might just as well have read it in a book," Rose's honest conscience said to her, and Florence wondered why her eyes looked thoughtful only, not in the least triumphant or glad. Rose was too stupid and childish, Florence thought, to enjoy her success; it *was*, yes, it *was* a pity that it had come to *her*.

There was a little pause after the motto had been read and the writer of the essay summoned to come forward and take the prize, and Maggie and Lucy Fanshawe had to push Rose to make her rise from her seat. She felt rather like a person in a dream, wanting to say something and not knowing how to begin, for fear the words that were in her mind should sound too strange in the stillness, while so many curious eyes were fixed on her. Some of the big girls actually stood up to see her pass, and as she came near the last bench she heard the Moncrieffs whispering to their neighbours. "It's the eldest of the Ingram girls. Her father must have helped her. I'm certain she could not have written all that herself, for she is not a bit clever. She's a childish little thing for her age even. She must have been helped." Mr. Henderson himself seemed a little surprised when he saw who was standing before his desk, but he stepped down to meet her, with a pretty little leather case containing the prize coin in his hand.

"This motto is yours, is it? This Runic letter and saying?"

"Yes, sir," Rose answered in a very shaky voice. "I copied it out of a book of my father's."

"But in other respects the essay is quite your own, I presume? You did not receive suggestions of how to treat the subject from any older person?"

The colour rushed vehemently into Rose's face, and tears came to her eyes with the effort of saying what she now felt she must say. "I don't think it was quite my own."

"Do you mean that you were helped?"

"Yes, a little; papa helped me a little, and Professor Mason helped me one evening when he was at our house, I think, a good deal."

The words were spoken slowly and with great effort, and in the stillness of the room all the students heard them. A rustle of dresses and a subdued murmur of voices came from the benches where the big girls sat; whether it betokened indignation or only surprise could not be told. Mr. Henderson turned and looked at the eager faces of his elder pupils, and then back again at Rose. "I think we had better leave the question undecided for the present," he said, after a few moments' thought. "I will call on Professor Ingram this evening, and learn from him exactly what amount of help he gave, and meanwhile Miss Ingram can go back to her place. We are all very much obliged to her for speaking so openly; and if she has received assistance in writing her theme, I am sure it must have been from not understanding that by doing so she was gaining an unfair advantage over others. The lecture is over for to-day."

Rose was glad of the bustle and general uprising



that followed this announcement, as it helped her to get back to her place unnoticed ; but as it was a quarter of an hour earlier than the class usually broke up, a great many of the girls could not get away immediately, being obliged to wait till their mothers or governesses came to call for them. Fräulein von Bohlen had taken advantage of there being no regular lecture to be absent from the class that afternoon, and the Ingrams were among those who lingered in the class-room after Mr. Henderson left it. The students broke up into little groups for gossip and conversation ; but no one joined Rose and her sisters except Lucy Fanshawe ; their other class-mates, small and great, were too busy discussing Rose's conduct that day to care to come within ear-shot. They were whispering to each other their wonder that she should have spoken out so boldly to Mr. Henderson, and confessed before everybody such a serious offence as having received help to write a prize essay. She must surely have known that it was unfair, and if she was mean enough to act so, what could have made her tell of herself ? Even Lucy Fanshawe was too full of wonder to be quite an agreeable companion, and Rose strolled away from her at last to the far end of the room, and was pretending to look at a map diligently when she felt her shoulder touched, and turning round, found the alpaca umbrella girl standing near her.

"I am just going, Miss Ingram," she said quickly, "but I thought I should like to speak a word to you, and tell you that the other theme that was read was mine."

"Oh, was it ? I thought so," cried Rose.

"Did you ? How could you tell ?"

"I don't know : it came into my head, and you looked

lown, and pinched your fingers, and I saw that you cared."

"Yes, I do care very much; but it is not for myself indeed. I should like to tell you why I care, if I had time. What I want to say just now is, that I do admire you for confessing you had been helped, and I am so much obliged to you. I could not have spoken out as you did, and I am a great deal older than you."

"Oh yes, you would," said Rose, "if you had thought there was anything unfair. What good would it have been to gain a prize unfairly?"

"I am afraid it would have been good to me. I shan't be able to make you understand; but why did you get help, if you only cared to gain the prize fairly?"

"I did not get it on purpose, it came by chance—just little things I heard that fitted in."

"It was very little help, then, and not unfairly gained."

"Why," cried Rose, noticing a little clouding of her companion's face, "you did not hope it was a great deal, and unfairly gained? You did not hope I had been mean?"

"Oh no, no, I hope not; but I am afraid being too anxious does make one mean. I so wish I could help it. I so wish that the people I am obliged to please did not care so much for success and prizes, and refuse to believe I am working unless I gain them. I am sadly afraid it will make me mean in the end; but I shall always think of what you did to-day. I wish we were in the same class."

"So do I," said Rose; "I think I should like you."

"And I am sure I should like you. My name is Mary Graham Papillon—I know yours, and shall not

forget it. Now I must go, or I shall miss my omnibus but perhaps we shall see each other again some time.

"I hope we shall, and I hope you will get the medal as you want it so much. I had rather have a big girl like you for a friend, than get a poodle even."

"I wish I was as independent of prizes. Perhaps Mr. Henderson will tell you how it is with me; he knows all about me, and he is very kind to me. I almost think he proposed this prize that I might win it. Good-bye—here is your governess coming in, I suppose it is four o'clock."

"We must never call her the alpaca umbrella again," Rose said to her sisters and Lucy Fanshawe as they were walking home; "her name is Mary Graham Papillon, a lovely name, I think; and only imagine her coming to me and saying she wished we were in the same class—a girl with turned-up hair, who sits on the front bench with the Moncrieffs."

"Rose has taken a fancy to her," said Lucy Fanshawe a little sharply. "She is going to set her up as another new friend, and all because she brings a horrible black Gampy umbrella to the class with her, and never brushes her hat; and cares so much for a stupid, faded old prize medal, that she condescends to wheedle Rose into giving it up to her. I must say you are easily pleased, Rose; there is not much satisfaction in being your friend, if such attractions as this can draw you away."

Rose protested again the charge of fickleness, but was a little troubled by it nevertheless, and remained rather thoughtful during the rest of the walk home. "Was it silly to like people easily?" she wondered "and to be interested by little things that let one in

their stories, or was it a right feeling, the drawing near to help the fire to burn brightly, that Mother Ursula had spoken of?" At all events, she could not help being glad that the alpaca umbrella girl had sought her out and given her a nice name to think of her by; it would prevent any little grudging regrets that would have crept in, with further thought of the great pleasure she might have had in showing the prize to her mother and Claude.

The doctor's carriage was standing before the door when the school-room party arrived at home. The elders of the house were evidently pre-occupied, for no questions about the class were asked, and nothing was heard or seen of mamma or Aunt Rachel, who was now staying in the house, till after tea-time. While the children were at tea in the school-room, a message came that they need not dress to go into the drawing-room that evening, as mamma was tired, and would only see them one by one for a few minutes before they went to bed.

"How lucky!" cried thoughtless Maggie; "for as we have no lecture to write out; we shall have a long time to amuse ourselves before dark. Let us borrow Willie and Trotty of old nurse; I daresay, as the weather is so warm, she will let us take them and Rose's bag to the attic stairs, and have a real good play at Swiss Family Robinson. What makes you look so grave, Rose? you are never going to be above Desert Island play because you have written a long essay?"

"Oh no, no," said Rose. "I should like it of all things, if only I knew that mamma was not worse."

"Doctors come to make one better," observed Maggie, cheerfully, "and mamma likes it. I heard grandmamma say one day to Aunt Rachel that she believed there

was nothing mamma liked better than fussing about health."

"Oh, Maggie, you must have misunderstood, and you should not repeat such a thing about mamma."

"Well, I mean no harm," said Maggie indifferently; "it was what grandmamma said, and if mamma is to be ill, we may as well hope she likes it, and that it is, as grandmamma thinks, more fuss than anything else. Let us go to the nursery and borrow the little ones before it gets too near their bed-time." The attic stairs were shut off from the rest of the house by a substantial door, which, when closed, deadened the noise made behind it; but this evening Rose was not satisfied even with this security against her mother's being disturbed, but did her best to keep the game quiet, and brought it as quickly as possible to the point of— "Its being evening and the shipwrecked family, having provided themselves with shelter and food, gathered round a fire made of spars from the wreck, and beguiled the time by telling stories to each other." This was the point at which Florence, and even Claude and Lionel, would sometimes condescend to join the game; and strict rules had been laid down to secure that every member of the family should contribute their share to the entertainment, from Heinrich, the youngest child represented by Willie (Trotty, not being able to speak plainly, had to play the inferior part of a tame seal), up to the father and mother, Rose and Claude, from whom the longest stories were expected, and who spoke last. Heinrich had just had his oyster-shell filled with boiling soup, and after taking several imaginary sips, and looking about him a good deal had begun:—

"There was once a king, I think he was a giant too,

but I am not sure, and he lived in a place a very long way off, and he was very rich and cruel, and people were very much afraid of him, but I was not at all afraid. I was a school-boy then, bigger than Claude, and very strong and courageous. Even the masters of the school I went to were rather afraid of me, and I only did just as many lessons as I liked. So I told the masters one day that I intended to go and kill that cruel king, and they said I had better not; but I went, and I took several of the biggest boys who were friends of mine with me, and we had swords and pistols and other things to fight with. So we got to the house—a palace it was—there were gold steps to it, and the hall was paved with silver, and there were soldiers, and cannons, and lions—real ones—on the steps, all looking very fierce. My friends and I did not mind them, of course; we marched past them with our pistols, and got up to the part of the palace where the king sat on a throne made of something brighter than gold, but I don't know what it was called exactly. This was the worst king that was ever heard of in the world; he squinted, and he had besides one eye in the middle of his forehead."

"Oh, Willie!" interrupted Florence; "you got that out of Claude's last story about the 'Giant in the Cave,' and we are *not* to tell things over and over again."

"Never mind," resumed Willie; "my king *had* an eye in the middle of his forehead, and he had another in his chin, too, and one on each of his cheeks. There, now! He was not like the giant in the cave; he was a great deal uglier and crueller. The people and children who lived in that country, and even the big school-boys, were very much afraid of him, and hardly

dared to play at cricket, or so much as fly a kite, for this wicked king kept in his palace quantities of policemen and school-masters, the worst sort, and dentists; and if any boy in the town only screeched on his slate with a slate-pencil, he sent a policeman to bring him to the palace directly, and ordered him to have a double-tooth out."

At this thrilling point of the story, a knock came at the door of the attic stairs, and Aunt Rachel, after fumbling a little with the latch, which was stiff, opened it and looked in.

"Rose, my dear, you are wanted downstairs, in the drawing-room, to speak to your father. I have been looking for you everywhere for the last ten minutes. What does possess you all to crowd together on this close dusty staircase, when you have nice large rooms and ample space in other parts of the house to play in?"

"But there's no other place in the house that can be made to look half as much like a desert island," said Maggie. "Aunt Rachel, do look up to the top landing, and you will see, leaning against the banisters, the quantity of beautiful sugar-canes we've got. The Father and Fritz brought them up out of the house-maid's closet, when they explored the island. Stair-rods, you see; was it not a clever idea to bring them for sugar-canes? they are so exactly like, and those little wooden soap-bowls, turned upside down, make capital cocoa-nuts, don't they? The things beyond are a basket of yams and prickly pears, and the enormous crab that Ernest caught in the creek. We are keeping those for our breakfast in the morning; and just look down there on the lowest stair, that is our pond where we get our fresh water; it's the nursery looking-glass on its back. Does not it make one almost

thirsty to look at it, it is so like real water? That was Rose's thought."

"It is hard to take her away from the enjoyment of such luxuries," said Aunt Rachel; "but I am afraid she must come. Perhaps papa will not keep her long, and she may be back before a desert island night is over; in time to eat those yams and cocoa-nuts for breakfast."

"Yes, come back as soon as you can, Rose; it is about the essay you are sent for, and we shall want to hear all about it," said Florence. "Would you like me to go with you?"

"No, Rose is to come to the drawing-room alone," said Aunt Rachel.

Maggie had actually forgotten all about Mr. Henderson's promised visit; and Rose, who had not forgotten, and who had been a little nervous all through the merry play, felt grateful to Florence for her sympathy and offer of countenance; it was one of those unexpected kindnesses with which Florence, in spite of her jealous temper, would now and then surprise people.

"Papa is not angry with me, is he, Aunt Rachel?" Rose asked, as she was following her aunt downstairs, and thinking there was something unusually grave in her manner.

"No, my dear, not angry, because he is sure that you can give a satisfactory explanation; but at present it seems as if you had been saying something about him in public that was not correct."

"Oh, Aunt Rachel! but indeed I did not. I tried to speak the truth as well as I could."

"Then there is nothing to be afraid of; only take care to make your explanation clear, now. I am sorry that you will have to speak before several people, but



it can't be helped. Papa was in the drawing-room when Mr. Henderson called, and he was taken there."

"Who else is there, Aunt Rachel?"

"Lady Dunallan and Mrs. Fanshawe; but you need not think about them; they are talking to mamma. Let us enter at once."

Rose heartily wished herself back in her desert island among the sugar-canes. A year ago she would have felt still more alarmed at the prospect of being cross-examined by papa, and having to repeat something she had said to him, but now she was used to talking to him, and knew he would help her through if she got into a tangle. She hung back just a minute, and said to herself that she would remember it was only speaking to papa, and that she need not mind who else was listening; and then she followed Aunt Rachel into the room, and walked bravely up to the window recess, where her father and Mr. Henderson were sitting together.

Professor Ingram held out his hand to her, but he looked grave and a little annoyed.

"Come here, Rose," he said, "and tell me, my dear, how you came to say that I helped you to write your theme for Mr. Henderson. I should be a very unfit person to be a teacher myself, if I were to interfere in such a matter with other people's pupils. I don't think I even knew the subject of your theme till it was finished. How could you say that I helped you and that Professor Mason helped you? Speak slowly and clearly, Rose."

Rose, profiting by the hint, took a minute to arrange her thoughts, and then said quietly, "Mr. Henderson asked me if the thoughts in my essay were quite my own? if I had talked the subject over with anyone?"

"Well, my dear, you had not talked the subject over with me, or with any of my friends, that I am aware of."

"It was one evening in the drawing-room, when mamma took off her silver bracelet to show it to Professor Mason, and some other gentlemen. They talked a great deal about coins, and Professor Mason explained to me why money was called money, and you said the word was like a telescope. That made me ask you to let me write my theme in your study; and as almost all the thoughts in my theme came into my head that evening from what I heard, I felt that I ought to say I had been helped when I was asked if it was all my own."

"You meant no other help than that?" asked Mr. Henderson.

"Oh no, indeed! But you know, sir, you said it was because the ideas were not taken straight out of books that you liked my theme, and gave it the prize; and as I *heard* everything, don't you think it was the same as if I had *read* it?"

"No, not altogether; there are different ways of hearing, and of reading, too, for that matter; and my chief business, as teacher, is to show you how to hear and read rightly. Go on hearing with fairy ears, that can turn the waifs and strays of conversation into jewels worth storing, and you will earn much better rewards than this little prize, which is fairly yours now;" and Mr. Henderson drew the red case from his pocket, and handed it to Rose.

She hesitated, and Professor Ingram took it instead, and opened the case.

"Ah! a Persian Daric; a very pretty beginning of a collection of coins, if you choose to make one, Rose.

Well, my dear, why don't you thank Mr. Henderson? Speak out if you have anything on your mind."

Rose began eagerly. "Oh, I don't quite know! I am very much obliged to Mr. Henderson, and I should like to have the prize, but—Mary Graham Papillon——" and then she stopped short, rather afraid of going on with what she had it in her mind to say.

Mr. Henderson came to her help.

"Do you know Miss Papillon? Is she a friend of yours?"

"Not till to-day; but to-day she spoke to me, and told me that you were very kind to her, and that she thought you would be glad if she got the prize."

"I should have been glad if she had deserved it, and I expected her to win it, as she is the most diligent of my pupils, and generally writes the best exercises of every kind. I certainly thought of her and wished her to carry off a mark of approval that would have served her with the relative who undertakes the expenses of her education, and who, being altogether an ignorant person, is not satisfied unless she constantly brings him proofs of diligence that he can understand."

"Miss Papillon, did you say?" asked Professor Ingram. "Is it the daughter of Papillon, the analytical chemist, who died the other day from some accident that occurred in the course of his scientific researches?"

"It was more than a year ago; this is his eldest daughter; and he left a large family in poor circumstances. An uncle has undertaken to pay the school expenses of the eldest son and daughter—not that he has much respect for a liberal education; but hearing they are clever, he hopes to put them in the way of earning money quickly, and helping on the young

members of the family. The mother lives in constant dread that he will repent of his generosity, and take the boy and girl from school to put them to inferior occupations; and nothing satisfies him of the wisdom of his present course of conduct so effectually as when the young people bring him tangible proofs of diligence, in the shape of scholarships or prizes."

"I think," said Professor Ingram, "I have heard Claude speak of a young Papillon, who runs a very close race with him for the head of their classes at B—— College."

"That is Mary's brother, a very good boy, who, though not much of a student by nature, works like a dragon for his mother's sake. I am afraid your son's successes at Christmas were heard of with some grudging and heartache by Mrs. Papillon and Mary. Their boy had done his best, and his abilities are considerable; but in their straitened home he lacks the opportunities for self-improvement that come as a matter of course to your children."

"As far as the boy is concerned, I don't see how we are to set that straight," said Professor Ingram thoughtfully; "public rewards and honours must take their course; but this seems to me a more private occasion, where perhaps circumstances that don't usually come under a teacher's notice may be allowed to weigh. What do you say, Rose? Mr. Henderson is so kind that I believe he will allow you to have a voice in the decision. It seems really to have been something like an accident that your theme was the best, Miss Papillon having given more study and thought to hers. Are you disposed to join me in asking Mr. Henderson to take this into consideration, and let her have the prize?"

"Yes, papa, indeed I am!" cried Rose.

"Then it shall be so settled," said Mr. Henderson rising with a look of great satisfaction on his face. "I am going to Mrs. Papillon's this evening. I will take the little case with me, and tell them what will give them all pleasure. Mary will have something to show her uncle when he calls next Sunday, and perhaps this little triumph of hers will so satisfy him as to lessen his anger, should Claude again gain the first prize over young Papillon's head at Easter."

"And then perhaps," said Rose colouring with eagerness, "Mrs. Papillon and Mary may not grudge Claude his successes so very much."

"I can't quite promise that, the stake is so great to them; but I think I can promise that the name of Ingram will not sound so disagreeably in their ears as it has done hitherto."

"We must take care that it does not," said the Professor. "We must think of some ways of making it pleasant. The orphans of a man who lost his life in the pursuit of science have a claim on us all. I had thought of inquiring about the family before, but other things put it out of my mind."

"For the future your daughter and Miss Papillon will meet at the college. Easter is so near that it would be useless to make changes, otherwise I should put her up into my first class at once. She will belong to it after the holidays. She is young, but she quite deserves the promotion."

The Professor looked pleased at this, and soon afterwards Mr. Henderson took his departure, and Mr. Ingram got up and left the room.

Mrs. Ingram then called Rose to her, and making her kneel down by the sofa, kissed her hot cheeks and stroked them with her thin hands. "My darling

child," she said, "I was afraid for you that you would be shy at having to explain to Mr. Henderson before papa. It made me nervous till I heard you got on so well, and then I was happy, for I saw that papa was quite content with all you said."

"You should not have been nervous," said Aunt Rachel a little impatiently. "It is such a pity you agitate yourself about every trifle. No wonder you are tired out long before the end of the day. You really ought not to know anything that passes in the house just now."

"But I must so long as I am in it," said Mrs. Ingram gently. "So long as I am with my children I must know all that concerns them, and feel with them in all their little joys and troubles. Even if it hurts me, I must do that as long as I can."

Rose laid her cheek softly against her mother's, and old Mrs. Fanshawe, clearing her voice as if something made it rather husky, said, "Well, I hope they all know how important it is that you should never have anything but pleasure from them. No one would wish to keep you from hearing pleasant news about them, such as this of Rose's nice essay, and I feel sure she will take care there shall be no worries for you to hear of."

"I will, yes, I will, as far as ever I can," Rose resolved, and as her heart swelled with love towards her gentle mother, whose sympathy seemed to grow closer and more precious every day, all temptation to vanity and self-satisfaction in what she had done passed away. It was nice to have pleased papa and Mr. Henderson, and to be put in the first class with Mary Graham Papillon and the Moncrieffs, but oh, what did anything signify compared to saving mamma pain or being of use to her? Mrs. Fanshawe, by way of giving

a cheerful turn to everyone's thoughts, began to repeat Lucy's praises of Rose's essay, and to expatiate on the dreadful loss it would be to her when Rose was advanced to a higher class, but the flattering words that would have been dangerously sweet a few minutes ago hardly made any impression on Rose now. She was thinking too much of her mother to care greatly for praise of herself.

Aunt Rachel interposed at last with a request that Rose might be allowed to get back to the desert island. "I should think," she said, "that quite twelve hours of desert island time have passed since Rose left, and the mother of the family must be sadly wanted to cool those yams for breakfast, and throw the prickly pears into hot water, to take off their stings. Jack and Fritz will get into dreadful trouble if she stays away much longer."

"Yes, yes, let her go," said Lady Dunallan. "I have a scheme in my head which I came to propound this evening, but I think I will talk it over privately with Aunt Rachel, and learn if she thinks it likely to produce pleasures rather than worries, before I go further into it. It is not important enough to interfere with the cooking of those yams anyhow."

When Rose got up-stairs, she found that nurse had been to reclaim Willie and Trotty, and that Lionel and Florence had deserted the game. She did not, however, greatly regret the break up of the Swiss Family Robinson, for it gained her half-an-hour's quiet chat on the attic stairs with Claude, during which he confided to her several interesting little particulars about school affairs that he had never mentioned before, and was drawn out into giving an exact description of Maurice Papillon, his rival in class and his chief friend, whose

striking likeness to his sister Rose proved to her own satisfaction. "Red hair, you say," she inquired anxiously, "but not at all an ugly sort of red, is it? And eyes, just the soft shiny colour of horse-chestnut skins, and a mouth shut close, as if it never would be opened unless there was something particular to say."

"Why yes, I declare it is; but I don't think I ever particularly noticed the colour of Papillon's eyes. Why should I?"

"I can't think how people can see without noticing. You say *his* clothes are not shabby. I dare say Mary can better bear to look queer herself than to let him look queer; that is nice in her. Mr. Henderson called him her younger brother, so they can't be twins."

"What does it signify?"

"Oh, I don't know, only it would have been nice for them, I should think, if they had been twins, that's all. And you are sure Maurice Papillon does not grudge you your prizes, or feel sore about it?"

"Not he; fellows are not such fools. They take their chance, and when a thing's all fair, they make up their minds, and care no more about it."

"But the mother and Mary, I suppose, can't help caring. Claude, is not it nice that we shall always have the Papillons to talk about now, you and I? I am so much obliged to you for all you have told me."

"Well, take care, then, not to talk about it to anyone else, or to me again till I begin. I am very glad you have got to know Papillon's sister; it will be a fine thing for you, and I shall have no objection to talk about them if you are careful, but now I must run off to the study. I've leave to work there in the evening till the exam., and I must make the most of it. I daresay Papillon has been grinding for hours already."



"I wonder what Lionel does with himself now we so seldom go into the drawing-room of an evening, and you are working so hard," said Rose. "I wish he would come to the school-room, but he says he hates the Fräulein. Do you know where he goes, Claude?"

"He's a fool," said Claude, "and he will find himself in a beautiful fix when the exam. begins, if he does not take care. I've said all I can, and if he chooses to be an idiot, it's not our business."

Rose was not so sure of this. She lingered about on the staircase after Claude left her in hope of coming upon Lionel, and persuading him to settle down to some quiet game with her in the school-room, but it was not till close upon bed-time that she saw him emerge from the door opening on the back stairs, and he answered her so sharply when she asked where he had been, that she did not feel encouraged to pursue the subject further.



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## CHAPTER XIII.

"L'AMI DES ENFANS."

NOTHING further was heard about Lady Dunallan's plan till the evening of the last school-day before the Easter holidays, and then, while the children were seated at tea, Rose's two godmothers appeared at the school-room door together. The holidays had begun with this evening, for the Fräulein, who was going to pay a fortnight's visit to some friends in the country, had ordered her tea to be taken to her own room, where she was busy packing up, and the boys had returned

from college with no work to do, and in rather an excited frame of mind. Lucy Fanshawe had run in just before tea-time, and Rose, forgetting the danger of increasing noise by numbers, had pressed her to stay for tea, and was now enjoying the hubbub of English talk and the shouts of laughter provoked by Lucy's fun as much as any of the party. Nurse Lewis had looked in once or twice to beg them to be moderate, and to remind them to keep in one room, and not to distract their mamma's poor head more than it was distracted by slamming doors every ten minutes, but no one, not even Rose, had been in the mood to pay much heed to her warnings. A quick glance that passed between Lady Dunallan and Aunt Rachel, after glancing at the merry party collected round the tea-table, brought anxious thoughts back to Rose's mind.

"Poor little things," Lady Dunallan said with a sigh to Aunt Rachel, "how happy they are. Well, it is certainly a blessing that children don't know what anxiety is, and can't look forward like their elders. One would not have it otherwise."

Rose did not hear the words, but she guessed that something was being said that referred to her mother, and she looked wistfully from one godmother to another when they took their places among the children at the tea-table. There was, however, nothing new to be read in Aunt Rachel's quiet face, and now that Lady Dunallan had taken Willie on her knee and begun to play with him, she looked quite as cheerful as usual.

Rose thought perhaps she had been mistaken about the meaning of that first glance; she hoped she had, and yet when Lady Dunallan began to speak about her plan Rose felt certain there was a deeper design in

it than just to furnish them all with something to do the holidays. It was a plot to keep the house quiet and Lady Dunallan and Aunt Rachel must have strong reason for being so very earnest on that point as they clearly were.

"The boys may run away," Lady Dunallan said soon as tea was over. "My plan does not concern them. They are going from home for the holidays; understand, and we shall hold our consultations by ourselves; for I am afraid they will look down on my little bribe to industry. Let us move to that round work-table in the window recess; I am a judge of needlework, and should like to see what you have all been doing in that line of late. I think your mother told me once that you each had a drawer for work in the circular table, and that Nurse Lewis gave sewing lessons on Saturday afternoons."

"That was before the Fräulein came," said Margaret; "we never have time for sewing now; and I really think we should almost have forgotten how to sew if I had not. Fanshawe had not persuaded us at Christmas to buy some clothes for our dolls that have never been finished, and if Rose had not taken a fancy lately to try and turn some of them into frocks for poor babies, we should have had all lost our thimbles till then, and Florence's needle missing still, and we have only half a pair of scissors between us."

"One pair and a half," corrected Rose; "you forget that I fished my scissors and thimble out of the hole in the rocking-horse the day after I bought my 'mother's bag.'"

"Which is your drawer, Rose?" said Lady Dunallan.

"It's in a great muddle, I'm afraid," said Rose, "I have been putting all the scraps and odds and ends

I could lay hold of into it, and I meant to have had a grand sorting out on the first holiday; but how odd! some one has been putting it tidy for me—it opens quite easily. Oh! Aunt Rachel, what lovely things! Real good stuff for frocks and capes, and pinafores, instead of rubbish, cut out and fixed too, all ready to begin. Did you do this while we were at college this morning, Aunt Rachel?"

Aunt Rachel's answer was drowned in a chorus of exclamations that came from the owners of the other drawers, who had by this time pulled them open and were busy taking out their contents. In each were found plain but pretty materials for a child's petticoat, frock, outdoor cape, and pinafore, and the three little divisions at the mouth of each drawer were furnished with serviceable scissors, new silver thimbles (sorted to the size of the fingers that were to wear them), pretty needle-books (with backs of Tunbridge Wells ware), and boxes to match, filled with hooks-and-eyes and buttons of useful sizes. The circular table held five drawers, and Aunt Rachel offered the contents of the fifth to Lucy Fanshawe if she liked to undertake to make up the material and join the working party, an offer which Lucy joyfully accepted.

"She is by far the quickest and neatest needle-woman of us all," said Rose. "How lovely it will be: why we shall have new frocks for all the Marshalls, and for another little girl besides; for Mary Anne, may it be, Aunt Rachel, the girl with the bonnet at the back of her head, who said she was always unlucky? She won't call herself unlucky when she has a merino frock and cape like those in Lucy Fanshawe's drawer, will she, Aunt Rachel?"

"We shall see," said Aunt Rachel. "It is one thing

to have the materials cut out and prepared in one's work-drawers, and quite another to have put in all the stitches and produced wearable frocks and petticoats and capes by the end of the holidays."

"Oh, Aunt Rachel, don't you think we shall all do our parts?" cried Rose.

"I had rather not give an opinion," said Aunt Rachel smiling, "or say how many beginnings of garments that looked very much as if they were never meant to be finished I picked out of some one's drawer."

"I did mean to finish them, indeed," said Rose, "only planning and beginning are so much the most interesting."

"Precisely," said Aunt Rachel, "and you see it is steady, monotonous work, and finishing we want; there are generally plenty of people to plan."

"I hope I shall begin to be a finisher now," said Rose. "Aunt Rachel, it was very good of you to put purple stuff into my drawer, I do love purple; and when I get very tired of stitching I shall think how nice Rose Marshall will look in a purple frock, and that will make me feel quite fresh again."

"Yes, you have an advantage over Lucy, and Maggie, and Florence, in knowing the children for whom you are working. You ought to set an example of zeal."

"I wish, Aunt Rachel, you would take us all to see the Marshalls and Mary Anne, before we begin to work," said Florence.

"Your mother would not like it, nor would Mrs. Fanshawe. I will bring Rose Marshall and Mary Anne here when the frocks are finished, that you may see them on; but, meanwhile, three of you will have to be satisfied with such a notion of the child she is

working for as Rose can give. I have no doubt she will paint them *couleur de Rose*."

"Aunt Rachel! I could not make out Mary Anne, and Clara, and Susie, and Polly to be nicer, or shabbier, or dirtier than they are."

"Well," said Lady Dunallan, "I don't wish to hold out a bribe for perseverance to anybody. I think you have all got sufficient motive for working steadily; but I want to have something more to do with this Easter holiday scheme than just having seen the stuff put into the drawers, so I shall begin by telling you a story. About sixty years ago there were four little girls, living in a country house, who at the time I am thinking of were about the ages of the four sisters I am talking to now. I was the third sister, and one of us, the one next in age above me, had a very lively imagination, and a great talent for mimicry, and kept us all alive with her frolics and practical jokes. I smile sometimes to myself now when I recollect the odd plays we invented in our long play-hours, and the absurd names we gave to every single thing and person we ever came across till we had almost invented an original language of our own."

"You talked English then, and had long play-hours—how delightful!"

"But in some ways there was more strictness in our bringing up than you have had any experience of, and to set against our English-speaking privileges, we had very few story-books. One new one, such as you would read and forget in half-an-hour, would serve us as the frame-work of all our plays for at least a year."

"But had you no lessons?"

"Oh, yes! we had a kind old governess, under whom we studied for part of the morning, but the afternoons

were our own, till one day, when our father told us that a French gentleman was coming on three afternoons in every week for the future to teach us to speak French. We dare not grumble, but we felt very much injured, and we resolved among ourselves that this new intrusive teacher should have hard times of it. His name was M. le Marquis de Raubaudet. He was a little withered-looking, meek old man, with white hair, tied back from his forehead with a black ribbon, and hanging in a pig-tail down his back. He was an *émigré*; his wife and his two sons had been guillotined in Paris during the Reign of Terror, and he had fled to England with four little orphan grandchildren, and was living with them in great poverty in a lodging in a country town near us when my father found him out. Our father and mother treated him with the greatest respect, but we four girls, I am sorry to say, could only see the little oddities of dress and manner that were more the result of his misfortunes than any parts of his original character. His meekness and strange absence of mind encouraged us to play tricks upon him, and even, I am ashamed to say, to mimic his old world courtesies and elaborate set speeches to his very face. I can only hope now that his pre-occupation of mind really did make him as blind to our stupid little jokes as we then believed him to be. The only reason we ever had to suspect he was more conscious of our folly than he appeared to be, was that our most audacious tricks were sure to be followed by some gracious act of kindness on his part, offered so pointedly to the chief offender, that at last our hearts and consciences began to feel some compunctions. Our last and worst offence against him was perpetrated one day when France incited a school-boy cousin to steal behind his chair

while he was reading Racine aloud to us, and with a sharp pair of scissors snip away at his *queue* till the whole mass of hair fell to the ground. If he discovered the loss when the reading was over, we did not know, for he said nothing about it, neither at the time, nor ever afterwards; but we noticed that he never offered to read Racine, nor indeed any other of his favourite authors aloud to us again. He appeared at the next lesson with a false *queue*, exactly like the real one, and drew from his pocket four gaily-bound little volumes, entitled *L'Ami des Enfants*, which he presented to Frances with a smile, observing that he believed he had hitherto mistaken our taste and capacity, and that for the future he would endeavour to provide reading suited to our understanding. Some of the stories in the book he had now brought us had, he told us, been written for his children when they were as young as we now were, but as reading these tales only brought painful recollections and useless regrets into the minds of his little grand-daughters, he would beg our acceptance of the copy the author had many years ago presented to him."

"I wonder if it is the same *L'Ami des Enfants* grand-mamma has?" interrupted Rose. "Was it four little thin volumes, bound in brown, and full of nice queer stories of little boys and girls living in châteaux, who wore swords and grand dresses, and powdered their hair, and courtesied and bowed to each other in the middle of their plays?"

"Our copy was bound in purple, with gilt leaves, but it was the same book. It was written for French children before the first Revolution, and the manners and customs described were not quite so strange to us as no doubt they are to you. We certainly preferred



*L'Ami des Enfants* to Racine greatly; and were now in such haste to begin our reading, which came after a due portion of French conversation had been got through, that we never dreamed of delaying our pleasure by inattention or nonsense. Sometimes the kind old man would increase our enjoyment of a favourite story by relating the true circumstances on which his friend the author had founded this tale, and from this would come out charming anecdotes of M. de Raubaudet's life in France, when he had been the lord of a grand old château, and his children had done the good actions towards the starving peasants of which our book was so full. He never seemed to think it strange or wrong, as we did, that there should have been so many starving people round such grand houses; he seemed to take that as a matter of course, and to think there was a great deal of virtue in the children of the château troubling themselves at all about the sufferings of the children in the hovels at their gates. There was one story which he never could hear us read without taking his large faded silk pocket-handkerchief from his pocket, and applying it many times to his old eyes. The tale related how four little girls resigned the pleasure of a grand new year's fancy dress ball, and employed the time and money saved by this act of self-denial in buying and making complete wardrobes for four little orphan peasant-girls whom they had found almost naked in a hovel, built of branches of trees, and mud, by the road-side.

"The father and mother had died of famine fever, and the peasant children were in the last stage of starvation, when the château children found them out and brought help in time to save them. The catastrophe had occurred on M. de Raubaudet's own estate, and the

four little girls who gave up the ball were his own four daughters. He used to remark with tears in his eyes, that it had been well for them and for him that their charity had made them good seamstresses, for that they had subsequently had to depend for their own daily bread on the art they had once practised for others. We were all so fond of this story that the volume learned to open at the place of its own accord ; and reading it so often inspired us with an ambition to imitate the good action of the four French children of long ago.

"Winter set in early and with great severity that year, and Frances, who was very observing and a little bit of a gossip, discovered that M. de Raubaudet's four little grand-daughters went on wearing their shabby summer frocks and thin tippets long after we were equipped in substantial winter raiment. We used to pass them on the road sometimes when we drove through the village with our mother, walking two and two with the old French servant who had followed them in all their wanderings. A prim little group of girls, with pretty pale faces all pinched and blue with cold. We dared not make them a present of warm clothing without excuse ; our father and mother had offered assistance and been refused, and M. de Raubaudet's pride and independence were up in arms at the least hint of patronage. But our Frances set her sharp wits to work, and hit upon a really clever contrivance. Our father's birthday fell late in November, and it had always been our custom to get up some sort of little surprise or entertainment in his honour, our mother taking care that funds to carry out any sensible device we might hit upon should be forthcoming. This year we resolved to act a little play in French, and we told our mother that if she would give us the materials

we required, and allow her maid to assist in cutting out, we would make ourselves all the dresses we wanted for the acting. The play was chosen of course from *L'Ami des Enfants*, and was nothing else than a representation of the good action of the four little French girls, which, luckily for us, was related in the form of dialogues easily learned by heart. M. de Raubaudet's grand-daughters acted the part of the château children, and were dressed all alike (in the prettiest and most serviceable winter costumes our mother's maid could devise and we execute), in order to take that memorable walk in the wood during which they discovered us—four little peasants shivering in picturesque rags in a mud house. The next scene showed the château children attired in nice indoor dresses, taking off the little peasants' rags, and dressing them in the good coarse clothes they had made themselves at the cost of giving up their fancy ball costumes. We all acted our part to perfection when our father's birthday came. The French children looked charming in their pretty new winter dresses, and were as dignified and condescending to the little peasants as if they had really lived in a château all their lives, and we kissed their hands and knelt before them invoking blessings, and were as much amazed at their condescension and goodness as French peasant children before the Revolution would have been required to be. M. de Raubaudet was present at the performance and applauded our acting, and complimented us on the purity of our French accent in his grandest manner. What was more to the purpose and gave us far greater pleasure, when the hour of departure arrived—he allowed his grand-daughters to take leave of us still attired in their acting dresses, and we saw them take their seats in the

carriage that was to convey them home, wrapped in the warm pelisses and furs, we had provided for the walk in the play. Stephanie, the eldest of the four French girls, was loud in her expressions of delight at seeing herself and her sisters 'si parfaitement bien mises,' but her grandfather only smiled at her raptures, and stroked her head in his absent way without answering a word."

"But did he never thank you for what you had done for his grand-daughters?"

"Not in so many words. At the next lesson we had, he directed us to read over again the story we had turned into a play, in order, he said, that he might correct one or two errors he had observed in our pronunciation, but he did not correct any errors. He listened for the chief part of the time with his thin wizened old face buried in his pocket-handkerchief, and hardly looked up till Frances finished reading the last sentence of the tale. Then with his elbows on the table, and his face, still wet with tears, between his hands, he sat for a few more minutes, looking from one to the other of us, in an embarrassing silence.

"Ah," he said at last, 'what a beautiful time youth is, what beautiful thoughts come to us in our youth. You are happy, my friends, to be young and to have such good hearts, that the old and unfortunate can accept kindnesses from you without too much suffering.' I don't think we understood the meaning of his words so well then as I do now, but we knew he meant to thank us, and we were well pleased with ourselves. Under Stephanie's good management, the acting dresses looked handsome and fresh all through the winter, and through a long cold spring; and at the end of May we had another fête for our mother's birthday, when eight

shepherdesses dressed, not appropriately, but prettily in white frocks, shady hats, and bright scarfs and ribbons, danced a rural dance on the lawn before our house, and sang a welcome to spring taken from *L'Air des Enfants*. M. de Raubaudet was quite in his element on this occasion, and played the music for the song and dance on a little old violin he had brought from France with him, and which had figured in many a village fête long ago."

"And did you make the French girls' dresses till they grew up?"

"They ceased to need help from us long before the time arrived. The cold winter I have spoken about which set in so early and lasted so long was the winter of the Russian campaign. The summer of the following year saw Louis XVIII. enter Paris, and Monsieur Marquis de Raubaudet was recalled from exile by his royal master, and reinstated in a portion of his old estates before the monarchy had been re-established many months. The Mesdemoiselles de Raubaudet stayed with us while their grandfather went to Paris to settle his affairs, and when he came to fetch them away it was to take them to live at the château we had often talked about and pictured to ourselves vividly."

"Did you ever go and stay with them there?"

"My two elder sisters did; but the opportunity never came to me. I married young and went out to India, and by the time I returned to Europe poor Monsieur de Raubaudet was dead, and his granddaughters settled in other homes; but (and now I come to the point of my story) all through the rest of our school-girl life we used constantly to receive kind letters and tokens of remembrance from our French

friends. The first were sent to us from Paris, and were bought, I do believe, the very day after M. de Raubaudet arrived there. I remember as well as if it were yesterday the delight we felt on receiving a foreign parcel directed to my eldest sister, and of finding, on opening it, four Easter eggs, in ivory and gold, which were discovered each to contain a complete set of working implements. A little gold thimble set in turquoise, gold-handled scissors, ivory *étui* for needles, and gold bodkins. They had gold chains to fasten them to the ornamental outside pockets worn at that time, and I can say that as long as my eyesight served me for needle-work, I have seldom been without mine worn in some fashion or another, and that it has done good service. Here it is, a little dented and tarnished by the long journeys it has undergone in my company, but a pretty toy still."

"May we open it? Oh, how pretty!" cried Rose, Maggie, and Lucy in a breath.

"There is a motto round the thimble," cried Rose, "but I can't quite make it out."

"It is 'Francais de plus,' the motto that Talleyrand suggested for Louis XVIII. to adopt on entering Paris. It was popular for those few months, and I was glad that it dated my thimble, and made it almost a historical curiosity."

"How you must value it," said Aunt Rachel.

"So much that I mean to have the pleasure of giving it away while I am alive, instead of letting some one who will never think of me in connection with it inherit it after I am dead. I am determined no one shall have it who cannot use it as diligently and lovingly as I have done, and since my great-nieces show no disposition to qualify themselves for its possession, I have made

up my mind to bestow it on the one of you five girls who shall produce the best made suit of clothes for a poor child at the end of these Easter holidays. Aunt Rachel and Mrs. Fanshawe are to pronounce on the merit of your work, for my eyes no longer serve me to detect puckers and uneven stitches; and besides, I am going into the country for Easter, and shall not return till after the garments are given away. That egg shall never be fastened to my chatelaine again. I have taken leave of it, and place it now in Aunt Rachel's hands to be kept for the diligent needle-woman of you who will win it, and give it, I hope, a fresh lease of useful life. I advise Aunt Rachel to put it in some safe but conspicuous place, where you can refresh your eyes sometimes by looking at it when an idle fit gets into your fingers."

"It is to be the reward of neat work, remember," Aunt Rachel remarked, as she received the egg from Lady Dunallan. "We consider it a matter of course that you will finish the garments I have cut out for the sake of giving them away. The prize is to be earned by beautiful stitches, and if any of you are ambitious to learn pretty ornamental ones as finishing for the capes and hems, I shall be happy to give lessons in chain stitch and embroidery stitches every evening after tea. I shall put the egg under the glass shade on the top of the little book-case in the drawing-room, where you can all look as much as you like without touching, though I don't recommend frequent visits, as looking and longing won't advance the work."

"Then let us have one very good look now, Aunt Rachel!" cried Maggie. "Let us all try the gold thimble on, and see which of us it fits best."

With more or less silver paper stuffed inside, the

able could be made to fit all the fingers, including  
 's, and a few stitches were set with it by each  
 er in succession to prove its quality. All agreed  
 there was magic in it, and that in spite of a  
 eney to roll off, it did better work than an ordinary  
 ble with no story attached to it could be expected  
 o. Experiments to prove this fact to doubting  
 Rachel were repeated by one and another till the  
 struck nine, and Packer appeared to say that Mrs.  
 hawe's servant had come for Miss Fanshawe, and  
 Mrs. Ingram wished the young ladies to come to  
 drawing-room to say "Good-night." One holiday  
 ing, the one that was usually most noisy, had passed  
 ably at all events. No doors had slammed for two  
 s, and no one had startled Mrs. Ingram by tumbling  
 stairs, or making unaccountable clatters overhead  
 e night nursery. Mrs. Ingram meanwhile had had  
 ort nap after her dinner, and since her waking  
 een enjoying a quiet talk with the Professor in the  
 y-lighted drawing-room. She spoke cheerfully in  
 a strong voice when the girls came in to wish her  
 od-night;" but the Professor would not allow them  
 ter on the story of the gold thimble. As Rose  
 d her mother's thin cheek over and over again, she  
 l not help fearing there was a suspicious moisture  
 , as if during the quiet talk a few tears had now  
 then been trickling down. The discovery made  
 recur to her first thought, that Aunt Rachel and  
 Dunallan had provided quiet employment for  
 during the holidays chiefly for mamma's sake, and  
 esolved that as far as lay in her power the scheme  
 d not fail.

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## CHAPTER XIV.

## AN EAST-WINDY MORNING.

A PLAN which had been entertained for sending Claude Lionel, and little Willie to spend the fortnight of the Easter holidays with some cousins living at Ipswich fell through, on account of the Ipswich cousins being so ill-advised as to break out in scarlet fever two or three days before the Ingram boys were to have come to them. Professor Ingram looked very much annoyed when the letter announcing this misfortune arrived one evening when the family were assembled in the drawing-room, but Mrs. Ingram took the news more calmly than she generally did any change of plans.

"I am not sure that I should have liked the three dear boys to have been away for a whole fortnight just now," she said, looking from her sofa to a far corner of the room where Lionel was playing jugglers' tricks with the solitaire balls to Willie's intense admiration. "You think their noise disturbs me, but you are mistaken. I should miss it if they were to go away; I should indeed."

This speech was addressed to Professor Ingram and Aunt Rachel, but Rose and Claude both heard it. Rose was sure Claude heard it, though he did not look up from the book he was reading, or remove the hands that were clutched in his hair, for she noticed how still he sat for several minutes afterwards without turning a leaf, and heard the fierce little growl that came from him when, later in the evening, Lionel choked violently over a glass ball that he had let slip.

too far down his throat, and caused mamma to start upright on her sofa with her hand on her heart. One might be quite sure that no really disturbing noises would come from Claude, or be allowed in his presence all through the holidays, Rose felt convinced; and there was great comfort in the thought, for Claude could do pretty much as he liked in the school-room and nursery.

A great deal of teasing can, however, go on with very little noise, and the girls had experience of this on the two following mornings, when they wished to settle in earnest to their needlework. The first days of the holiday week—Easter Monday and Tuesday—had been spent partly in going to church with Aunt Rachel, and partly in paying long-promised visits to grandmamma and Mrs. Fanshawe. On the middle days the girls expected to make up for lost time, and get a good many hours in the morning for steady work, but they found themselves mistaken in their reckoning. Those days were really the “tug of war.” All sorts of little things seemed to go against them. The weather was beautifully fine, and the sun shone as brightly as possible, but nurse was provoking enough to discover that there was a bitter east wind, and to raise the usual objections to doors and windows being left open, or to people sitting on the attic stairs, or in the housemaid’s closet, or the shoe-hole, or inside the shower-bath, or any other desirable spot where non-workers might have been coaxed to betake themselves out of the way of the industrious. She even went so far as to accuse Florence and Lionel of having sore throats, though the supposed sufferers (except at meal-time, when they gave in so far as to decline crusts and accept black-currant jam) stoutly declared that nothing ailed them.

Grandmamma Ingram, who was always on the non-coddling side, and generally took the children's view of the weather, on this occasion supported nurse's opinion of the east wind by getting a bad attack of bronchitis, and being obliged to send hastily to Aunt Rachel to come home to nurse her; so that there was no further hope of sewing-lessons or support in industry to be looked for from her. Papa, who was to have gone away on a lecturing tour, stayed at home; and, instead of shutting himself in his room all day, and becoming absorbed in study, he sat with his door ajar, and appeared at it on the slightest possible provocation—hardly what a reasonable person would call a noise—if merely a ball hopped down-stairs, or Lionel made a simple attempt at fishing over the banisters with a long piece of pack-thread and a crooked pin, on the chance of a housemaid's cap or Packer's wig attaching itself thereto. What but teasing could be expected under such circumstances from two idle holiday boys disappointed of a pleasant visit, and shut in with five girls all crazy about some new needlework, and stupidly indifferent to more important topics? Even Claude relapsed into old half-forgotten ways of being tiresome, and revived the antiquated joke of pretending to put back his hair with the tips of his fingers before he spoke, in imitation of what Rose thought a particularly pretty gesture of Lucy Fanshawe's, keeping her in perpetual fear lest her friend, who was as sensitive to ridicule as apt to indulge in it at others' expense, should discover she was being mimicked. The squabbles between Lionel and Florence were even more distracting, for there was always a danger, especially when Maggie and Lilly thought good to interfere, of tempers being worked up to a point which would call for inter-

ference from up-stairs or down before they could be quieted; which might have disagreeable results for everybody. Such unforeseen stupid trifles will give rise to squabbles, too, when minds are prepared by idleness for squabbling. On Friday morning, for example, when Rose and Lucy Fanshawe had just arrived at the interesting point of beginning to run the first tuck in the skirts of the frocks they were making, the peace of the whole party was destroyed for the entire day by just such a foolish little circumstance as Lionel's chancing to find Willie's old green toad skip-jack in the tray of the school-room inkstand. The morning had promised so well, too, that it was the more provoking to have it spoilt. Rose, who was perhaps always a little hard on Florence, traced back the whole misfortune to Florence's wilfulness in persisting against advice in bringing this same inkstand to the work-table.

"What did one want with ink when one was sewing?" she asked; and though Florence pretended she wanted to draw a pattern of a flowery stitch for the top of the tucks, everybody knew she only thought of it because she liked a pen in her hand better than a needle, and because she was tired of having to measure the depth of her tucks with a card to keep them even, as Lucy had advised her to do. At the rate the workers were progressing, with all these quarrel interruptions, there seemed so little chance of the most advanced ever being ready for ornamental stitches, that it was really almost provoking to have it talked about.

It must be conceded, however, if quarrels are to be traced back through all their stages of development, that Lionel's attention might never have been called

to the skip-jack if Rose had not made such a dead set at Florence for her idleness, that Lionel, who had nothing to do, had some excuse for growing provoked with such very ostentatious industry. Claude had been sent out by his father to change some books at Mudie's Library for his mother, and just as Lionel was preparing to accompany him, when he and nurse were disputing as to whether or not he should, in consideration of his sore throat, put on a necktie, there came a message from Mrs. Ingram from her bed, to beg that Lionel would stay at home that morning. She had heard that there was a bitter east wind, and she could not bear the thought of Lionel running a risk of increasing his cold by going out. She had rather do without the books, and have both the boys stay at home to keep each other company. Lionel was ready to burst out in loud complaint at the horrid "coddling," and the absurdity of insisting that a fellow's throat was sore when he himself said it was not, but Claude first growled at him, and then whispered something or other in his ear that had the effect of quieting him down in a minute, and making him so meek and civil to nurse all at once that she proposed of her own accord to let Willie come down to the school-room and keep Master Lionel company till Master Claude got back. She could not, she said, have the babies disturbed from their morning sleep by goings-on in the nursery, but she thought she might trust Lionel to have his little brother with him for an hour or so without their turning the school-room out of the windows. Lionel's strong point, one which in his mother's eyes made up for all deficiencies, was, that next to Rose he was the one among the school-room children with whom the little ones were most at home. Willie adored him and

haunted his steps at all possible opportunities, gladly putting up with snubs and an occasional cuff when he was much in the way, for the sake of the delightful times when Lionel was at leisure and willing to play with him.

The first part of that morning had given a golden opportunity to little Willie, and as long as the boys had been content to stay at the oil-clothed end of the school-room near the door, and far from the work-table, and act two sledge-drivers in Norway travelling through a forest and being attacked by wolves, the young ladies were not troubled by their neighbourhood. Lucy Fanshawe might make little disdainful grimaces and express to Rose her surprise that a boy of Lionel's age should care to go on with pretence games, and grow as excited as Willie over shooting down the chair wolves just as they were supposed to be climbing the backs of the sledges; but the sisters took no notice. Pretence games had always been the fashion at the Ingrams'. Perhaps Lionel observed the contemptuous grimaces and did not like them, for his interest in the wolves gradually lessened, and he grew restless; first he put Willie up to wanting more and more chairs for their sledges. The Fräulein's arm-chair was pressed into the service, to the peril of its weak leg; then Maggie and Lilly had to give up their seats and consent to work standing, just till the sledge-drivers had got safe into Tronyem; and then the whole thing was suddenly changed; the chairs were not to be either wolves or sledges, but to be built up into Vogel Islet, with a cave, where Rolf (Lionel) was to live till blind old Peder and Oddo the herd-boy came to fetch him away. Willie could be Oddo and climb to the top of Vogel Islet, and some one from the working party must leave

her sewing for two minutes and be Peder, and row him down the Fiord in the rocking-chair, which always had been a boat in the holidays since it came into the school-room. Rose was longing to offer to be Blind Peder herself, when an objection struck her: Vogel Islet was very insecurely constructed, and she felt certain it would break down and let Willie through into the cave with a horrible clatter the instant he attempted to land upon it, and what would papa think of the noise just over his head? She declared rather hastily that the boys were growing tiresome, and that she wished they would keep to their own end of the room and be content with their own chairs. Maggie and Lilly really must have theirs back, and if Willie did not bring them directly she would take them from the bottom of Vogel Islet herself. This imprudent challenge was answered by Lionel and Willie throwing themselves on Rose's chair and trying to drag it from under her, and though Lionel desisted after threats to summon nurse, he was now really out of humour and bent on being disagreeable. In this mood his eye fell on the old toad skip-jack, a thing which the girls had always hated, and which the Fräulein had confiscated weeks ago and put out of Willie's reach in the school-room inkstand, to save herself and her pupils the annoyance of having it flying into their faces and the crevices of their necks at unexpected moments. When Lionel pounced upon it with a cry of triumph, Rose consoled herself with the hope that the frog had long since lost its jumping powers; she did not know that skip-jacks had lately come into fashion among Lionel's set at school, and that he carried a supply of catgut and shoemaker's wax handy in his pocket to make and mend them. A short interval of chuckling and

springing between the boys at the far end of the room followed, and then came a shriek from Lucy Shawe, into whose neck the frog had jumped. Lucy, unused to skip-jacks, had the imprudence to throw it off as far as she could send it. Willie secured it alighted next on Rose's head, and before she could disentangle it from her hair Lionel had it again, and a pitched battle between the Ingram boys and the girls began to rage. All scruples about noise were put aside and forgotten as the frog flew here and there, and each time it fell from an insulted face or neck, the wish to secure it on each side was the uppermost and only thought. A screech, such a screech as Florence alone could ever guilty of, brought them all to their senses for a while. What could be the matter? The angry frog rang through the school-room, and as the door stood open must have reached mamma's bedroom on the same floor, and most likely been heard in papa's study downstairs. Lionel and Rose both rushed upon Florence to soothe her cries, whatever might be their cause, knocking over the chief part of Vogel Islet on to Willie's toes to their dismay, and causing a second disturbance even more disorderly than the first. If Florence were half-killed she might not to make such an outcry in the present state of affairs, and Florence was not even hurt, she was only in one of her states of mind which were two-thirds temper and one-third nervous excitement. After a second shriek she stood speechless, with one hand holding her aching throat to keep back more cries, and the other pointing to the inkstand on the table. This was on its side, with the frog perched on its uppermost edge, looking as if it meditated a plunge into a black pool of ink wherein Florence's work lay. Rose had no time to seize the grey merino and display the de-



plorable state it was in before mamma ran into the room, in her blue dressing-gown, as pale as death, and papa followed just in time to save her from falling down in a faint among the ruins of Vogel Islet. Nurse Lewis had to be brought from the nursery with *sal volatile* and burned feathers, and there was a great commotion.

For a long time mamma could not be persuaded that the dreadful shriek did not mean that some one was seriously hurt, and as Willie had been frightened and slightly bruised by the descent of Vogel Islet on his toes, and was crying a little, she concluded he was the chief sufferer, and would tire herself, even before her breath quite came back, by taking off his shoes and stockings, and rubbing his toes to ascertain that none of them were broken. Papa was naturally very much disgusted when it gradually became clear that nothing had really been injured but a half-made merino frock, and that the whole hubbub was caused by Lionel's teasing ways and Florence's ill humour. He was very angry with them both, but mamma putting in a plea for Florence on account of her supposed weak health, the heaviest part of his displeasure fell upon Lionel, who narrowly escaped being sentenced to pass all the remaining mornings of the holidays in the study under the Professor's own eye. If Claude or Rose had by chance incurred such a sentence, they might not have found it a very severe punishment, but in this instance the doom looked so dreadful, both for papa and Lionel, that Rose timidly, and mamma imploringly, ventured at the same moment to put in a word of remonstrance.

"My love," said mamma breathlessly, "I think there are seven more mornings; you would find it very irksome. The air of the study is stuffy for two people,

pecially when one of them can't sit very still. I don't know how you would either of you bear it."

"And papa," said Rose, "I was very nearly as much to blame as Lionel. Would it not do if we all agreed to stay in our own particular homes in different parts of the house till dinner-time? Would you ask nurse to let us?"

"I have nothing to do with that," said the Professor, looking a little puzzled; "but if I don't insist on Lionel's spending the mornings in the study with me, he must distinctly understand that I forbid him to come here or interfere with you or with the children in any way. Whatever else happens, I will not have mamma startled and disturbed again the first thing in the morning. You hear, Lionel?"

"Yes, sir," said Lionel, turning away with as much indifference as he dare assume in his father's presence, and pretending to occupy himself entirely in picking up a broken castor and fixing it on to the lame leg of the Fräulein's chair.

Rose noticed the expression on his face as he did this, and felt very sorry. It was the look, among all Lionel's looks, that foretold the worst consequences. Partly obstinate and partly mischievous, for there was actually a smile lurking in the corners of his mouth. It seemed to say: "Well, if you *will* fuss and fidget, till you have not left me one reasonable way of spending my time that is not forbidden, I'll take it into my own hands, and find something to do that will make you wish you had let me alone."

When Claude came home a quarter of an hour later with the Mudie books, he found the school-room deserted by everybody but Rose, who was disconsolately turning out her drawer, into which the ink had trickled through a crack in the table.

"Where are all the others?" he asked. "What's the matter? you look as glum as possible."

"A dreadful mess," said Rose. "Just look here—did you ever see such ink-stains? And nurse won't let us have any salts of lemon."

"Oh, bother," said Claude; "what do I care for those stupid rags? I want to know where the others are. I thought we might have managed a game at something before dinner."

"My dear, you won't think of such a thing when you hear what has happened," cried Rose. "Papa has been in such a way, and we are hardly to look at each other for the rest of the holidays."

A detailed account of the events of the morning followed, to which Claude listened somewhat contemptuously.

"Just like you all," he said. "Just the sort of mess you always do get into when I'm away; you have none of you any sense. Where is Lionel?"

"Papa has given Lionel something to write out; that would, he said, keep him quiet for the rest of the day. I don't think he would have done that if Lionel had not stood fiddling with a broken castor, and looking—oh, you know how Lionel can look when things are going very wrong, and how quick papa is to notice it."

"Florence got nothing to write out, I suppose?"

"No; but nurse has carried her off into the nursery, and she is to gargle her throat three times a day, and be fussed over. I don't know whether she means to like it or not. I know I should not. As papa was leaving the room, taking Lionel with him, he turned round and looked at Florence, and asked how old she was; and when she sobbed out ten-and-a-half, he put up his eyebrows and said he was surprised to hear it.

I must say I had rather have had a boot thrown at me. I should not have liked papa to have done it, but it would have been easier to bear. I was sorry for Florence. She could not stop herself crying and sobbing, and mamma and nurse settled that her throat was very bad indeed, and that she must be kept quiet in the nursery away from us all, ever such a time. Lucy Fanshawe, however, had a good-natured thought; she slipped away home while we were all being scolded, and came back with an invitation from Mrs. Fanshawe for Maggie and Lilly and me, to bring our work to her house every morning, and she says she will give all the help Aunt Rachel promised, and teach us the difficult stitches.

"Rubbish! you don't want to learn them."

"Oh, but I do," cried Rose. "The others have gone off, not to lose the rest of the morning—but I stayed to talk to you, and see what you thought of the plan. It will keep the house very quiet. We might almost as well, all of us, be doing our lessons."

"Quite as well, I should say," grumbled Claude, "and so might I. Pretty sort of Easter holidays we are having this year. What a shame it is we did not go to Ipswich. Such nonsense about people taking scarlet fever. I am sure I should not, or if I had it would not have been as bad as staying at home, with nothing to do all the mornings, and not even a soul in the school-room to speak to. It's too bad."

"It would not do you *much* good, would it, if I were to stay away from Mrs. Fanshawe's? I could not be of *much* use to you, you know," said Rose, wistfully, "and I should lose all my chance of finishing my work well, and getting the ivory egg."

"If you want the ivory egg, and mean to go in for

nothing but sewing, get it, pray," answered Claude; "it's no concern of mine, and I'm sure I don't want to hinder you, only I thought you were above caring for such fiddle-faddle, and were getting to have some sense; and it came into my mind that if your head had not been full of these girls' fads, I would have asked you to sit in the carpenter's shop with me, and we would have had another try to finish that galvanic battery. You used to be very handy at fitting and glueing, last holidays; and when I had got the battery to work, I could have tried it on you. You don't mind shocks, you say."

"Not so very much," said Rose; "only I don't know how I could work if my fingers were twitching, and the glue would be rather bad. I should lose all chance of the egg, and this morning I was feeling so sure of winning it."

"I'm sure I don't want to hinder you, or to have you in the carpenter's shop, if you don't like to come. I shall get on by myself somehow, I suppose."

"Walter Papillon," suggested Rose.

"Papa says we're not to ask fellows to the house just now; and if I might ask him, he would not come. He says that holidays are for one's home people, and not for fellows one has enough of in the term. He has always got some of his people about with him wherever he goes—little brothers, or something—and if he sees a college fellow, he'd sooner turn down a street to get out of his way than speak to him. He's no good to me in the holidays, and now you're no good. Do as you like, of course, but I must say it is rather a shame."

The early dinner-bell rang, and Rose, before going up-stairs to get ready for dinner, ran to the drawing-

room, that she might fortify herself against Claude's rumblings by a loving look at the ivory egg. The hope of getting such a beautiful thing for one's very own, to keep all one's life, was surely enough to excuse me for being—should one say?—a little disobliging to one's brother. No, that sounded bad; it really was only being a little firm in carrying out one's plans, instead of making them give way before other people's unreasonable requests. One must stand up for one's self sometimes, or nothing would ever be done. The drawing-room was usually empty in the morning, and Rose was surprised to meet Florence coming out hurriedly just as she entered.

"Why, Florence, I thought mamma told you to stay in the nursery! How came nurse to let you down here?" she cried.

"Nurse has gone to her dinner. Don't stop me," said Florence, who looked red and queer, and held her hands awkwardly before her, wrapped up in her pinafore.

"You came, as I do, to look at the egg, I suppose; but, oh! poor Florence, I'm afraid your chance is gone. I'm so sorry, and I will make nurse give me the salts of lemon, and do all I can for your things, I promise you."

"It's no use; never mind. I don't care what becomes of them. Let me pass," Florence answered gloomily; and she ran away without giving Rose a full view of her face even. No wonder; a person who had been crying as Florence had been crying might well not like to be looked at; and while still in the sullen stage of remorse and shame, there was no use in trying to comfort her.

The ivory egg had been fixed upright on a velvet cushion under the glass case, and stood open to display

its dainty contents. Rose looked long, but the sight did not give her quite so much pleasure as usual. It might be a grand thing to work with a curious old thimble set in turquoise; it would be something to show to one's friends at working parties all the rest of one's life, but then if one remembered all the time that one's brother had said one was of no use to him! Would not Mary Graham Papillon be happier working with a common thimble, and knowing that her brother thought all the hours of the holidays wasted that were not spent with his own people? How had Mary managed to bring this about? There were lots of little ones in the Papillon household who must be plagues sometimes. What plan could Mary have hit upon to make things go smoothly among them all in that little dark house in the holidays? Rose pondered this problem as she turned her back on the ivory egg and mounted the stairs to her bed-room. Maggie and Lilly had not yet returned from the Fanshawe's; so, after washing her hands and smoothing her hair, she had still a few minutes at her own disposal. Aunt Rachel had asked her to learn by heart, during Lent, the Epistle for Quinquagesima Sunday, which her Sunday scholars, one of whom was Rose Marshall, were to repeat to her on Easter Sunday. Rose Ingram had been ready on the appointed day, but her godmother had not found time to hear her repeat her lesson, and now she thought she would just glance at it again, for fear it should slip from her memory. She had read as far as the verse, "Charity never faileth; seeketh not her own"—when Maggie and Lilly burst in from Mrs. Fanshawe's, in great bustle, to get their out-door clothes taken off, as they were late, and bubbling over with high spirits and excitement.

much nicer than working at home, you can't," cried Maggie. "Mrs. Fanshawe is delicious; she has shown me how to pink the trimming for the cape, so as to make it look just as if a real maker had done it."

And when we had been working half-an-hour she told us that we must be hungry," put in Lilly, "and she brought out such a nice citron cake, and gave us each a glass of cowslip wine, like what we had at her Christmas party, and Lucy handed round some drops twice besides. It is fun, I can tell you, to be there for a sewing lesson."

"You will find that out for herself to-morrow," said Rose, "for Mrs. Fanshawe says we may come every time the work is done; and I know by the twinkling of her eyes when she said sewing is hungry work, that she means to bring out the cake again. You'll see."

"I shan't," said Rose, sighing; "Claude wants me to stay at home and help in the finishing of that old galvanic battery that he has been trying to make so many holidays and I almost think I shall."

"Nonsense! you must be out of your mind to think of doing nothing, to sit in Claude's stuffy carpenter's shop instead of going to Mrs. Fanshawe's. And how would you ever get on?"

"I could keep it clean, I suppose, if I tried," said Rose thoughtfully; "and I should have time between now and then to do all the plain sewing, and I don't believe Mr. Marshall cares a bit for trimmings or ornamental work. That was only invented to keep us quiet, and to teach us to like sewing. The solid part is all we can do; and it is hard on the boys to have no fun all their holidays."

"What about the ivory egg!" cried Maggie; "you forget



that it is to be the reward of beautiful work. You don't mean that you will give up all chance of it to help Claude with his ridiculous old battery that never will be finished, and that would be of no use to anyone if it was? Well, you *are* an idiot!"

The second dinner-bell rang at this moment, and the girls trooped down-stairs.

"Seeketh not her own," Rose said softly to herself, as she followed last, with rather a sober face. "'Love seeketh not her own'—things for oneself, that means—rewards as well as other things. Yes, I understand. I shall have to stay at home with Claude, and I must try to make him think I like it best. No, I must *really* like it best. Depend upon it, Mary Graham Papillon *likes* best of all to please her brother, and that is why things go smoothly with them. It must be the best way. 'A more excellent way,' as the chapter says."

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## CHAPTER XV.

### THE CHILDREN'S WINDOW.

FLORENCE'S hasty visit to the drawing-room was not noticed, and it did not recur to Rose's mind, even when, in the course of the evening, her father noticed a vacancy in one of the drawing-room book-cases, and wondered whether Aunt Rachel or Mrs. Fanshawe had borrowed one of the books. He never thought of the forbidden books being touched by the children. Yet Florence had been guilty of this act of disobedience; and at the moment when the Professor made his remark in the drawing-room she was taking a well-bound red

book from under a heap of dolls' clothes, and wondering where she could best enjoy the stolen pleasure, that in a sort of desperation at what she called her own misfortunes she had snatched at for herself. Anne had gone downstairs to fetch the water for the children's evening baths, and nurse had taken the three little ones to bid mamma good-night, she was secure of being alone for ten minutes, and if she could establish herself in a judicious place she might be left still longer undisturbed. Nurse had a quick eye for things out of place, but was less likely to spy out a forbidden book than anything else taken without leave. The day-nursery had three doors, one of which opened on to a light closet, which all the children coveted, as an indoor home, beyond any other "corner" of the house. They liked it, partly because nurse could seldom be persuaded to allow them to bring books or work there, and partly because its one slip of a window commanded a view into a back street and a stable-yard, which could only be had from two other windows in the house, and those high staircase windows, filled with stained glass. Florence now took her book into this most desirable retreat, climbed on to a low table under the window, where nurse did her ironing, and settled herself so as to catch the full light on her page. Nothing could be more comfortable; it ought to have been the perfection of enjoyment, for this book was very interesting, and no one came near her, and she read on and on, sometimes growing really absorbed, but oftenest feeling, all through the reading, an uneasy sense of discomfort and a gnawing anxiety, that took all zest from the pleasure, and made it so nearly pain that it was wonderful she continued to impose it on herself. Nurse came back to the nursery, and put the children to bed, without

thinking of her, and it had grown so dusk that she was obliged to hold the book close to the window to make out the words, when she heard her mother's voice, calling,—

“Florence! Where are you, dear child?”

“Where are you, Florence?”—(that was papa speaking).

Florence slid from the table, thrust the book under nurse's ironing-flannel, and came back into the nursery feeling very much frightened and ashamed. It was a relief that the nursery was so dark—mamma could hardly see her. Yet, what a shame it seemed to be trembling and shaking at the sound of mamma's kind voice—poor mamma!—who had climbed the steep nursery stairs on purpose to kiss her before she went to bed.

“My dear!” said mamma, gently, “what made you shut yourself up in nurse's closet, while the little ones were being bathed and put to bed? I should have thought you would have liked to look on. Rose and Maggie think it such a treat to be allowed in the night nursery at bed-time.”

“I did not know the children were being put to bed. I have been in the closet a long time,” said Florence in a low voice, that sounded sullen.

“Reading some nice story-book, I dare say,” interposed papa, cheerfully; “if it was one of the old marble-backed set that came from Scotland, I will forgive you, Flo, for forgetting everything else. Come show it me, and I'll tell you if it is one of my old favourites.”

It was not often that Professor Ingram spoke in that easy familiar way to one of the middle-aged children and Florence felt that the cheerful look and cordia-

words were meant to make up for his glance of contempt when she was crying; that *had* been worse to her than a boot thrown at her head. How she wished she could have responded with a piece of confidence, that might have begun a habit of talking to her father as freely as Rose now talked. As it was, she poked her chin into her neck, and mumbled,—

"It was getting too dark to read. I had not been reading much just before you came in."

"Looking out of the window, and inventing stories about the children in the back street then, eh?"

"Yes," stammered Florence, in a voice that even to herself sounded horribly sulky. She had not meant to tell an untruth, yet here one had slipped out, and she did not know how to recall it; for already her father had turned away, with a look on his face, that said as plainly as words could say:

"What is one to do with such a sullen child?"

And her mother, to put an end to the disagreeable display she was making of herself, stooped down and kissed her hastily.

"Good-night, my dear. I must not stay; I came up-stairs because I was anxious to see you before I went to bed; but I am very tired, and ought not to stand about. You will gargle your throat carefully, and do all nurse bids you, won't you, love?"

A low sulky-sounding "Yes" was all Florence could bring herself to speak, and how often the remembrance of her own cold tones and unresponsive kiss came back in moments of anxiety and bitter regrets afterwards. While she was crying herself to sleep in bed that night, she thought she would not open the red-backed book again; but the next day, when her throat had been pronounced worse, and strict orders laid upon her not

to come near the other children, she began to long again for the forbidden excitement, which seemed the only one within her reach, and harder to turn away from, now that she had so thoroughly tasted it. Nurse's little devices for her amusement, such as setting her to dust the old doll's house, and to wash the tea-service that had never been properly put away since Lilly's birthday, afforded her very poor satisfaction, and could not be lengthened out over more than half-an-hour of the long morning, and when Rose sent up the grey merino frock, cleansed from ink stains, and ready to be finished, she turned away in disgust from the thought of beginning upon the tedious tucks all alone, with no one to join her in grumbling at them. Nurse was sitting in the night-nursery with the little ones, to keep them from coming round Florence, and no one seemed disposed to notice what she did; she would at all events take the book from under nurse's ironing-flannel and put it in a safer place. Once in the closet, with the book in her hand, it seemed impossible not to go further. She opened at the place where she had left off last night, and stood for nearly half-an-hour turning page after page, while hardly acknowledging to herself that she was reading. At last, coming to a point of absorbing interest, she abandoned all pretence of intending to leave off in a minute, and seating herself on the table, made up her mind to hurry on to the end, and set her curiosity at rest. Nurse came into the closet once or twice during the morning, to search in the shelves for something she wanted, and then Florence, more from a guilty conscience than from any real fear of being questioned, slipped her book under her apron, and pretended to be amusing herself by looking out of the little window. On one of these occasions, she saw

something that startled her. Her eye fell on four boys, who were playing at marbles in the stable-yard, which the little window overlooked. High as she was perched above them, she could distinguish them plainly, and she first suspected, and then felt sure, that one of them was Lionel. That certainly was his blue cap, and as he looked round she saw his face plainly. Yes, and the tallest of the boys, the one who was now leaning against the stable-door, and tossing something in the air, while the others looked on, was James Packer, that eldest son of Packer's, who used once to be allowed to come about the house, and even occasionally to join the boys in their kite-flying excursions, but who, for some unexplained reason, had lately, by strict orders from Professor Ingram, been cut off from all intercourse with the household. How could Lionel have got leave to play with him again, and in the stable-yard too, where mamma so particularly disliked him to go?

Florence puzzled herself with this question till nurse left the room, and she drew her book from its concealment to begin reading it again, and then it flashed across her that there was such a thing as doing as one likes without leave. If she found it so easy, why not Lionel? and mamma ill, and papa anxious and unhappy all the while. It seemed a very bad thing to do, yet somehow or other one went on. There remained only five chapters to the end of the book. Florence said to herself that it would be best surely to finish, and get the wonder about the end fairly out of her mind, so that she might forget the whole matter, and make up for one act of disobedience by scrupulous attention in the future. She hurried on, therefore, turning over the leaves breathlessly, but all enjoyment was over, for

her understanding of what she read was disturbed by a vision of "Lazy Lawrence" that kept coming before her mind. She saw him seated on the horse-block, playing at pitch-and-toss with the "stable-boy," and being led on by bad companionship to cock-fights, and a prison in the end. If Lionel should be beguiled to like courses by Packer's son, and mamma be made very ill through grief at hearing it, how should she answer for not having given warning? When she had turned the last leaf, and read the last sentences, a terrible feeling of disenchantment and flatness came. The latter half of the book had really been beyond her comprehension, and now that there was nothing more to come, she wondered how she could have cared to read it, burdening herself with so much remorse for such a short-lived doubtful pleasure. The only thing worth caring for now, was how to get the horrid book back in its place without being questioned about it, and forced to make any more false excuses. Her head ached badly, the consequence of her having spent the entire morning in rapid reading; and after dinner, nurse sent her to lie down in the night-nursery, while Anne took the little ones out for a walk.

While they were away nurse had a visitor, a friend of her own, with whom she soon fell into eager confidential conversation. The door between the night and day nurseries had been left open. Florence thought of getting up to shut it several times, as the buzz of voices made her head ache, but after a while a word or two dropped by nurse's friend fixed her attention, and she could not help listening to the end.

"As bad as a boy can be of his age! do you say? Well, well, no doubt you did right in speaking out; but poor Mr. Packer, I feel for him. Of course, as you

say, he ought to look after his son; but when there's no mother what can one except? I never could be hard on a motherless boy."

The answer came in Nurse Lewis's most emphatic tones.

"And I'd no wish to be hard on the boy, Mrs. Jones; it's not likely I should, having knowed him from a baby; but when I saw that he was doing harm to them that have a mother yet—to break her heart if they go wrong, but who mayn't have her long, though little they think it—all the ill-will that my fellow-servants can put upon me shouldn't have kept me from doing as my conscience bid me."

"So you spoke about it to the master himself, and the boy has been forbid the house, you say; and Mr. Packer naturally very much put about, having always looked to his son's coming in as foot-boy under him. I only hope it's all going on straightforward now. I can't hear anything of the boy's being sent into the country, as Mr. Packer promised, and the neighbours do talk about his hanging round in the stable-yard day after day doing no good."

"So long as our young gentlemen keep clear of him, it's no concern of mine," answered nurse; "and I can't think so badly of Master Lionel as that he would disobey his papa's orders just now, when his poor mamma is as ill as ever she can be, and his papa so anxious—for master's eyes are opened at last, and not before time, I say."

"You think very badly of Mrs. Ingram, then, I'm afraid, nurse."

There was a little doleful sound, which, as Florence knew, always accompanied nurse's most foreboding shakes of the head, and then,—



"Shut that door, Mrs. Jones, behind you, and I'll tell you what I've seen coming plainly enough this long time, while others have chosen to think different."

The door was shut, and Florence, who had sat up in the bed, threw herself back and buried her face deep in the pillow, trembling all over.

Oh, what could it mean? *what* was it that nurse had foreseen, while she was attending only to her own concerns, and even sometimes thinking discontented thoughts of papa and mamma and disobeying their orders? An answer came, but it was so dreadful Florence could not bear to let it enter her mind. "Oh no, no! nurse could not have meant *that*." To be sure, she had said, "Those that have a mother now, but mayn't have her long;" but, oh no, no! she could not be foreseeing a terrible time to come upon them, when they would have no mother to care what they did. She would not surely have spoken so quietly if she had meant *that*; she would not let them all go on neglecting mamma's wishes (Florence had given a great deal of trouble that morning by refusing to gargle her throat); worrying her, too, with noises and fusses about trifles, if she really thought a time was coming soon when there would be no mother in the house to consider and obey.

Surely people were warned of such dangers as that; then Florence remembered Lucy Fanshawe's regret at having lost an opportunity of pleasing her father, which never came again; and like a sting the thought came, "If mamma should never be well enough for me to tell her of my disobedience these holidays about the red book! What shall I do, if I have to remember all my life that I disobeyed her when she was ill, and never got her pardon?" It was not yet

ate. Florence might have gone that moment into mother's room and confessed all. Her mother did not be angry, she knew; but perhaps she would be paler than ever, and put her hand on her heart as she did when anything agitated her, and then papa would look very stern and begin to question her, and perhaps all about Lionel would come out. She believed she ought not to hide what she had seen; but then, if she told her such a history of misdoing was disclosed, she would be very miserable all the rest of the days, and the others would reproach her for putting herself in a place where she had been forced to act as

She could not make up her mind to face all this and blame.

Florence had hitherto prided herself on her honesty, though reserved and sullen tempered, she had never been guilty of deception; but now self-will and pleasing were leading her into faults repugnant to her character.

She stayed tossing about on her bed in a wretched state of indecision till Anne came to call her to tea. She saw that she had been crying, and remarked as she combed out her hair and straightened her frock that for her part she did hate having to do with piny-whiny children, who fretted when they had everything they did want to make them happy; such had a deal more to keep their tears till the time when they would have something real to cry for.

Would Anne, when she said this, be thinking of the something as nurse had hinted at? Florence felt quite miserable as she crept to her place at the tea-table, and told herself that as things were so bad already she did not bear to make them worse for herself and hers by telling tales.

After tea Florence took the red book and stood at the nursery-door watching for an opportunity of slipping down to the drawing-room and restoring it to its place. Soon she saw Lionel at the end of the passage, having just come up from the back staircase, and she beckoned him to come and speak to her.

"Well, what do you want?" asked Lionel, not over pleased at being waylaid. "I thought you had a sore throat, and must not speak to any of us."

"Oh, just for a minute I may. I want to know if any one is in the drawing-room just now?"

"Mrs. Fanshawe is there talking to papa; but what is the row? What is that to you? You don't want to go there yourself, I suppose?"

"Not particularly," said Florence, stammering; and Lionel, at first surprised, caught sight of the book in her hand, and uttered a loud, somewhat contemptuous,—

"Oh, that's it! you've been helping yourself to a book without leave, and you want me to smuggle it back into its place. No, thank you, I've enough scrapes of my own to answer for."

"No, I don't," said Florence, putting the book behind her; "I did not call you for that. I don't want to get you into a scrape, Lionel; I want to tell you that I saw you from the closet window with Jim Packer; and oh, Lionel! I am afraid you were playing at pitch-and-toss, like the stable boy and Lazy Lawrence."

"Rubbish," cried Lionel, who had, however, turned very red. "I never played at pitch-and-toss in my life. Shows what rubbish you get into your head, and that you'd better mind your own business."

"But you were in the stable-yard with Jim Packer."

"What then? What business has a little girl

like you to spy on her brother? I was doing no harm."

"Oh Lionel! I was not spying, I saw you from the window when I was reading in nurse's closet."

"Ah, yes; reading one of mamma's books!"

"Oh, Lionel, I do so wish you would not——"

"Do what? You had better know a little more before you cook up a fine story against me to make your own disobedience seem a trifle."

"You know I would not do that; but, Lionel, while mamma is so ill——"

"Much you have thought of that. Why, it was our screaming the other day, and the fuss over you and your throat, that has made her so much worse that she can't take the drives papa and Aunt Rachel opened so much from. Papa has just been saying so to Mrs. Fanshawe."

"But, Lionel, if mamma got to know that you played with Jim Packer."

"Oh, if you choose to make another fuss, of course you'll do her a great deal more harm; and who says anything about my *playing* with Jim? as if we were a couple of babies, like yourself. If I go into the yard to look for Packer and find Jim standing about, can I order him out of the place, I should like to know?"

"But you were there half-an-hour."

"Waiting for Packer."

"Lionel, don't go yet; I want to say one more thing. Suppose it were true that mamma was very ill, so ill that people felt afraid she might not get better?"

"Nonsense," cried Lionel, starting and turning pale, however, while he tried to look angry. "You say it to frighten me. You *can't* believe it yourself, or you never would take *her* books without leave, and slip down on

the sly to hide them. You need not trouble yourself to preach to me after I have seen that—thank you.”

Lionel turned and walked away as he spoke, and Florence, after standing for some time longer at the door, undecided what to do, went back into the nursery and hid her book again in the toy-cupboard.

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## CHAPTER XVI.

### EASTER-EGGS.

“WELL, Rose, I must say I am a little disappointed.”

It was the last day of the holidays; the Fräulein was expected in the evening; lessons and attendance at college were to begin the following morning, and Aunt Rachel had come to inspect her little nieces' needlework, and award the golden egg to the most deserving. The finished garments lay in five little piles on the round table, and Aunt Rachel, after examining them in succession, had come back to Rose's pile a second time, and was turning over its contents with a dissatisfied expression of face. “No hooks-and-eyes, or tapes, or stays to the pocket-holes,—nothing neatly finished off,” she continued; “and then, this great red stain on the purple frock! Yes, I am disappointed, Rose; I thought you would have set your namesake an example in neatness and thoroughness in your work, I did not expect *yours* to have been the only slipshod performance among them all.”

“I am very sorry about the hooks-and-eyes, Aunt Rachel,” said Rose. “Somehow they got mixed up

with Claude's iron shavings, and slipped into the acid bath inside his battery, and when we fished them out they were so rusty that I could not use them. That red stain on the frock was made by a rusty little hook falling on it. However, nurse has promised to give me some more hooks-and-eyes and a fresh piece of tape (Claude took the other piece for a great battery emergency), and I promise you, Aunt Rachel, that hooks, stays, and all, shall be put on before the poor children come for their clothes this evening."

"I shall hope to see it. Rose Marshall does not want encouragement in the art of pinning on her clothes. I wonder you had not sufficient pleasure in working for your favourite, to induce you to keep clear of the boys' haunts while you had this sewing in hand. You wasted quite time enough over that battery at Christmas, Rose, and might for once, I think, have given your mind steadily to a piece of woman's work."

Rose said nothing, and the two other girls stood by silent; not from ill-nature or want of loyalty to Rose, but that they had not understood her conduct well enough to defend it.

For a little while Rose was downcast at Aunt Rachel's disapproval; but soon she remembered how pleased papa had been, when this morning Claude had shown him the battery finished at last, and how, looking at her, he had said he was glad Claude had found something pleasant to do these sad holidays, and so been kept from worrying over the next term's work.

Perhaps the helping him to get interested again in his old battery had been useful woman's work after all, though it did not look like it.

Aunt Rachel was now holding up another set of garments to the light. "This grey stuff was given to

Florence, I think," she said. "Here is a terrible ink stain hidden skilfully among the plaits, but the work is good and the finishing quite perfect. I wonder whether nurse has been helping Florence."

"Aunt Rachel," cried Rose, sparkling with as much pleasure in speaking as if Maggie had been forward in defending her, "I *must* tell you something. It was Maggie who did the best part of that work, besides her own—Maggie and Lucy Fanshawe. Florence has been too ill to work, and Maggie and Lucy carried off all the unfinished clothes from her drawer and brought them back as you see."

"Well done, Maggie," said Aunt Rachel. "I really do think you have found out your talent at last, and mean to turn out the needlewoman of the family. The prize for good work lies between you and Lucy, but you are so closely matched that I must consult Mrs. Fanshawe before I decide anything. I must run away now to give grandmamma her tea, but I will come back in the evening and decide this weighty question. I called now chiefly to tell you that Rose Marshall and Mary Anne Sims are coming here at five o'clock to have their new frocks tried on by their dressmakers, and that mamma and papa gave leave for you to entertain them at tea in the kitchen. Stay in the lower rooms and make as little noise as you can, till I come back, and then, with Mrs. Fanshawe's and Lucy's help, we will find some pleasant way of spending this last evening of the holidays and amusing your little guests."

"I have not seen my namesake since that snowy day when Teddy was lost," cried Rose Ingram; "and I do so want to know all that has happened in the Models since. Aunt Rachel, do you think I might take Rose Marshall very softly to the top of the attic

stairs after tea, and sit there with her and have a talk?"

"Yes," said Aunt Rachel, smiling; "if sitting on the stairs is an absolutely necessary condition for a talk; but I should have thought one of the rooms down-stairs would have done as well."

"Oh, no; for cook, and Packer, and Anne would be all standing about wondering what we were saying to each other, and we should neither of us be able to begin. The attic stairs would be much more easy and sociable, almost as good as those dear dirty stairs at the Models, where we got to know each other first."

Aunt Rachel now took leave, and Rose had only just finished sewing on the last of her hooks-and-eyes, when Anne appeared in the school-room with the news that two little girls were at the back-door inquiring for Miss Rose. Down ran the three Ingram girls in great excitement; but Rose found the meeting with her namesake, under these circumstances, a far shyer affair than previous interviews under the iron gate had been. The little girls from the Models stood in the entrance passage, crushing themselves up against the white-washed wall and looking frightened, while cook, with arms akimbo, exclaimed from her kitchen-door, "Well, I do wonder whatever made Miss Ingram send them children 'ere at this time of day;" and Packer, with the plate-basket in his hand, looked out frowning from the pantry. Rose rushed forward boldly, however, and took her namesake's hand.

"Oh, Rose, I am so glad to see you; come in here, and tell us all about your mother and Teddy. I wish you had brought Teddy and Clara too—I wish you had all come."

The ice was effectually broken. Rose Marshall's



face flushed and brightened into smiles and happy looks.

Oh, please, miss, Teddy did so want to come. Mother had to hold him to keep him from running after us; and, all she could do, he got free and would have been down-stairs in no time if Blind Ben had not caught him in his arms. Please he's broke the cart, and his drum don't make no more noise, and he says he wants to bring it back to Master Willie for him to put some fresh music inside of it. Nothing will serve him but that."

"Come in here to the servants' hall, where we are to have tea, and tell us about everything," cried Rose, joyfully. "So your mother has come home from the hospital? Well, is she? How happy you must be!"

"Oh, miss."

The two Roses squeezed each other's hands, and for just a minute a spectator looking at them might have been puzzled to know which was which, for some sudden thought had turned the Red Rose pale, while the White Rose's face glowed with joy and thankfulness.

"Mother has been home just a week, miss, and she looks almost like herself, and father—but you know all about that, miss—*that* is all along of you, I know."

"But it is not," and Rose Ingram regained colour and smiles all at once. "I don't know in the least what you mean; but if it is anything good, do tell me."

Rose Marshall glanced backward at Mary Anne Sims, whom Maggie and Lilly were now leading in by the hand, and at cook and Packer on the watch outside, and she turned shy.

"Never mind," whispered the Red Rose, understand-

ing her in an instant. "I will take you after tea to a place where we can talk quietly, and then you shall explain it all to me."

Though all enjoyed themselves, there was rather a lack of conversation during tea, for Maggie and Lilly directed their attention chiefly to watching their guests' plates and refilling them the instant they were empty, and between whiles they indulged in remarks to each other on the strange little girls' looks and appetites, that were not exactly calculated to set them at their ease. Mary Anne did full justice to the buttered tea-cake and the bread-and-jam, in spite of her embarrassment; but Rose Marshall began to slide the contents of her plate into her pocket-handkerchief long before she had eaten what the Ingrams would have called a reasonable high tea for one of themselves.

"Is it because you want Teddy to taste everything?" Rose Ingram whispered, when she had seen a little pile of eatables set aside.

"Please, miss, I can't eat no more, and little miss there said I must take another bit, and Polly and Teddy do love jam-and-bread, and mother does too."

"Come with me, then, and I'll find you a little basket—one I had for shells last summer; you shall put the slices you've saved in it, and take it away with you. I want, too, to show you my bag, *the* bag where I've been storing little things for you—useful things, at least I hope you will think them useful, for I have been saving them up a long time."

The whole of the party, including Lucy Fanshawe, who came in just as tea was over, now adjourned to the topmost landing of the back stairs, and Rose produced the bag from its hiding-place in the back attic, and proceeded to display its contents one by one. It was a

great satisfaction to her at the end of the evening, when she thought over all that had passed, to be able to assure herself that the odds and ends from the bag had given her namesake more pleasure, and been received with warmer expressions of gratitude than the solid, handsome gifts of clothes that came afterwards. Aunt Rachel might not have thought better of the White Rose's sense on this account, but it showed a likeness of taste between the namesakes that the richer one found very gratifying. And besides, the handsome presents were another person's contrivance, and the result of a fortnight's work, while the odds and ends represented a good many little acts of self-denial and sacrifices of time, scattered through several months. It was sweet to find that the pleasure given by them was even greater than had been imagined, and that the White Rose not only instantly perceived the uses for which the miscellaneous treasures had been designed, but was quick to suggest quite unthought-of ways in which they might be made to do good service. That pair of scissors with the infirm screw, that Rose Ingram had only *hoped* might possibly be coaxed to cut a little longer, was seen by Rose Marshall to be just the very thing for Blind Ben to use in poking out the ends of old cane from the frames of the chairs he was reseating; better a great deal than a new pair. The many-coloured scarf, knitted up by Rose Ingram from the wool of the old antimacassar that the Fräulein had pronounced too shabby even for the back of the school-room sofa, Rose Marshall declared to be so nice for mother to throw over her head when she ran out to the shop of a sudden on a wet night. The dilapidated copy of "Alice in Wonder Land" that had certainly taken a good deal of careful pasting, and ingenious supplementing here and

there of written sentences for lost pages, was received with a glow of pleasure that over-paid all the toil.

"Why! it would do to take down-stairs to show to Mrs. Johnstone's little lame daughter, who never got out; and Mrs. Johnstone had been so civil to mother since she came out of the hospital, and Reuben, that was Mrs. Johnstone's son, had brought the telegram about Teddy, and done a many kind things for them all ever since."

To find some way, however small, of returning the obligation, was clearly a pleasure very keenly felt. Also on further examination Rose Marshall found out how good the pictures were.

"Father would like them; perhaps he could even copy them to help him in the new sort of work better than the common carpenter's work he had got to do now. Thanks to you, miss."

"Oh no," cried Rose, "not thanks to me. I wish it were, but I am afraid not; how could I have had anything to do with getting your father better work?"

By this time Lucy Fanshawe and Maggie, tired of the exhibition of treasures, of which they had already seen and heard a good deal, had carried Mary Anne Sims away to the spare room to try her new dress on, and the two Roses had the back stairs to themselves. The White Rose sat on the landing with a store of gifts, the precious book uppermost, piled on her lap, and the Red Rose sat a step or two lower down, turning an eager face up to her companion.

"I could not have had anything to do with it, but if it is anything good, I am so glad. Do you mean that your father is—is—that he never throws boots?—you know what I mean."

"O, miss, I am so sorry I ever said anything of *that* to you, for father always was kind even then, and now

that he has got work that he likes, and with a different sort that don't tempt him to the ale-house, he ain't been like *that* for ever so long. Mother do cry for joy now sometimes to see how regular he is in coming home, and, miss, it must have been along of you that the gentleman who spoke about the better work came to see us, for he said he was your father, please miss, and Teddy knew him."

"Papa!" cried Rose Ingram. "Did papa come to see you at the Models? Oh, I am glad! Do tell me all about it."

"It was the week after Teddy was lost, a cold day, and I had been trying to do better since that afternoon at the church, miss. I had made the room pretty tidy, and got a bit of a blaze in the grate, for Reuben Johnstone, he had been up with a present of a scuttle of coals from his mother, and they was real good coals, and father had come in from work, and said he would clean himself and stop at home a bit. It was lucky he did, for just as he was sitting quiet in mother's chair by the fire, carving a bit of wood into a head, for the horse without a head that Master Willie gave Teddy, there came a knock at the door, and when I opened it, it was a gentleman, miss, and he asked to see father, and Teddy he set up a shout when he see him, and said he would go back in a cab with him, and get some more chicken, and cakes, and almonds, and pudding he would, miss."

"And what did papa say?"

"He smiled quite pleasant, miss, and sat down in mother's chair, and father took the broken one, and they talked for a long while. The gentleman asked after mother first thing, and said he knew how hard it was to get along when the mother was sick; and tha

pleased father, and by-and-by the gentleman noticed the horse's head father was carving, and they talked of carpentering work and turning, and father brought out some little ivory things he turned for mother a long time ago, and a picture-frame he carved when we lived in the country, all of leaves and flowers, and the gentleman said it was a pity he did not get work like that to do, for it paid a deal better than common work, and father said that was what he had been told before he came to London, but he had not found any one to employ him. They was all for machine-work now-a-days, the upholsterers was, father said, and then the gentleman told him he knew of a place where such work as his was wanted, and he would give him a letter, and please, miss, we'd no ink or paper in our room, but I'd made myself tidy that day, and I went down to Mrs. Johnstone's room, and she give me what I asked for quite civil. She was pleased to hear that there was a gentleman sitting along of father; and the gentleman wrote his letter at our table, and next day father took it to the place and got some work to do at once, miss, and he's been working there ever since."

"And that was papa's doing—*my father's*?" said Rose Ingram. "I *am* so glad. Do you suppose he knows that your father got the work?"

"Oh yes, miss; for a fortnight after he called again, and father'd brought a job of carving home with him to finish, and the room was littered a bit with shavings that night. It was the back of a chair, and father thought he'd like to carve a bunch of lords-and-ladies, such as we used to gather under the hedges at Brooklyn, for an ornament on it, miss, and I'd run across to ask for a book, with pictures of flowers, from the school-library, for father and me could not agree

about the marking of the leaves. When I got back there was the tall, kind gentleman sitting in mother's chair among all the shavings, and please, miss, drawing the lords-and-ladies on the back of the chair with a bit of carpenters' pencil. Father was surprised to see how easy he did it, miss."

"Oh, my father can do everything," cried Rose, proudly. "He knows all about flowers and everything."

"And please, miss, he do seem to think a deal of *my* father. They sat and talked till long and long after Teddy's bed-time, and when he got up to go he promised father to lend him some books, and he advised him to go to a place where he could get some drawing-lessons, and hear lectures and things—it's called a college, miss—and father goes there when he don't come home of an evening, and he sees your father there, and he says he thinks different about a many things from what he did before he knew Professor Ingram; and, miss, he's begun to go to church again, and he'd left off because some of his mates said it was no use. Mother is happy of a Sunday now."

Rose Ingram put out her hand and took Rose Marshall's and gave it a little squeeze, and then they sat silent a minute or two.

"Rose," the Red Rose whispered softly at last, "do you remember that first time we sat on the stairs together at the Models, you asked me if I did not love my father very much? and I actually did not quite know what to answer then. I could answer in a minute, if anybody asked me now. It is very odd, but it does seem to me, in looking back, as if you and I had been having something to do with each other all this time, while we have hardly met, as if things had been coming to us through loving each other."

n't know about you, miss; but please, I do and mother thinks, that a deal of good has come out of my knowing you."

No, not me,—it was really papa; and the odd thing is that perhaps I should not have got to know you properly if I had not known you. I was—can you tell me, Rose?—so surprised to see how much you loved your father and mother, and what a great deal they did for them, and I thought I should like to do the same for them. Oh! I am glad that I found out mamma had got to be so ill as she is now."

"Your mother is ill, miss?"

"No, and yours has got well. I don't envy you, but I only wish I was as happy as you are. I know it must have been for you when your mother was laid up to the hospital."

"That was bad; and, miss, I am so sorry for you" (sighing); "miss, you know where we say in church of persons'?"

"Rose, do you know, ever since I saw you at the last winter, I have always thought of your mother when those words came."

"Yes, miss, now I'll think of yours. I shall never forget a Sunday, never."

"Thank you," Rose said, softly.

There was another silence, which was broken by her putting her head in at the passage-door and calling on the two Roses to come downstairs for Rose to have her frock tried on.

"They are all waiting for you," Maggie explained, as she reached the passage on to which the school-door opened. "Lucy Fanshawe has a scheme, and really must come and help. We are to act as a band for Rose Marshall and Mary Anne, in their new



clothes, are to come into it; and the ivory egg is to be given away as part of the acting. Such a lovely scheme! no one but Lucy Fanshawe could have thought of it. Let me explain it to you before any one else does. The word is Easter-egg, and we four are to be girls come home for the Easter holidays very busy painting and gilding eggs to take to our grandmamma on Easter Sunday morning. Oh no, stay; first we are to be sitting together wondering what present we could take to grandmamma, and a knock will come at the door, and two little girls from a cottage, our Sunday scholars (Rose Marshall and Mary Anne Sims, you understand, in their new dresses), will come in with a basket of fresh eggs, laid by their own hens, and offer them to us. Rose Marshall will carry the basket and make the speech, because she looks the nicest and knows best what to say. Lucy Fanshawe has now run home to get some sugar eggs that were given her lately, and she will put these in your shell-basket, and among them the ivory egg. You are to run down to the drawing-room, Rose, and take it from under the glass-case just before we begin to act. Mamma has promised to come to the school-room to see the charade, and Aunt Rachel and Mrs. Fanshawe are there already. We four are to go in first to do the talk about our having come home from school and our being invited to breakfast with grandmamma on Easter Sunday morning. We shall leave Rose Marshall and Mary Anne outside in the passage, and when Lucy rings a little bell they will knock at the door and present their eggs. That is the first scene, and acts the syllables Easter and egg. The second scene is the whole word. We are all to be breakfasting with grandmamma; Rose Marshall and Mary Anne are little servants laying out the table, and bringing in the

Easter-eggs on a dish covered with a napkin. You, Rose, will take the dish from Rose Marshall and offer it to your grandmamma (Mrs. Fanshawe), and she will say, 'Here is an egg too large for my taste, I must ask one of you to eat it for me;' and then she will pick out the ivory egg and give it to the one of us who is to have it for a prize. We are not to know who has won the prize till that moment. Lucy has settled it so with Mrs. Fanshawe and Aunt Rachel, who are consulting over our work this minute. Won't it be fun? I shall quite tremble with excitement when the minute comes, and Lucy says she only hopes she shan't spoil the charade by crying out, she shall feel so anxious when Mrs. Fanshawe puts her hand in the dish. But won't it be beautiful? really quite as good, I think, as the play Lady Dunallan and her sisters acted with the little French girls."

"I must say," cried Rose Ingram, "that Lucy Fanshawe is the most delicious girl for schemes I ever heard of. I only wish some other people could see the parade besides ourselves! What a pity papa and Maude and Lionel have gone out for the evening. I wonder whether nurse would like to come down to the school-room with Willie, and Trotty and Florence! Poor Florence! she has no chance of the prize, but she would like to see the fun. I must run and ask mamma."

"Make haste then. We have dressed Mary Anne in a nightgown and shut her up in the housemaid's closet for fear any one should see her before the right time, and Lucy has run home for her eggs, and to hunt out scarves and ribbons and things for us to dress up in; and you must dress Rose Marshall while I look out the dolls' china for the breakfast scene."

"I won't be a moment. Here, Rose Marshall, is the dressing-room door, go in there. You will put your new frock on the table, and you had better to put it on, till I come back to you. I won't be a moment."

Mrs. Ingram was already in the school-room, looking somewhat better than usual, and as full of curiosity about the proposed entertainment of which the girls had made a mystery to her, as could be desired.

"Yes, certainly," she said, when Rose proffered her request. Florence might come, and nurse and the other ones, yes—and Anne too—and Emma, the upper-handy maid, if Rose liked to ask them. She saw no objection to every one in the house being invited into the school-room to see what the dear children were going to do, if they wished it. It was sure to be something nice, and she would not miss it herself on any account.

Expectation had been raised already in the nursery by Maggie having rushed in to borrow two house-caps and to get the dolls' china from the play-cupboard, and Willie and Trotty were so eager to be in the room of whatever might be going on that nurse had no heart to raise objections. Florence was the only person who hung back. She was standing before the cupboard when Rose came into the nursery putting back some boxes that Maggie had disturbed, and seemed too busy, or dull, or cross to take any notice. Mamma had given Rose strict orders not to let Florence or go too near her, as there was still a suspicion of infection from the sore throat, so she could not drag her away by main force to enjoy herself as she felt inclined, or rouse her from her moodiness with a friendly shake of the shoulders; she could do no more than linger a little after nurse and the little ones.

left the room and put her invitation in a still more inviting form.

"Come, Flory, you don't know how grand it will be. Mrs. Fanshawe has given Lucy leave to bring everything she can think of over from their house for us to dress up in. It will be as good fun as our charades at Christmas."

"Not for me," said Florence. "What fun *can* there be for me, when I am to sit by myself and hardly speak to any one, just because they choose to make a hateful fuss about my throat and worry me till I dislike everything?"

"Oh Flory, but when it is mamma?"

"There," said Florence, in a tone of such real pain that Rose was startled. "As if I possibly could mean mamma, when I said a thing was hateful! I wish you would leave me alone. If I must sit away from everybody and take no part in the dressing up, I had rather wait a little, and slip into the school-room quietly after the charade has begun."

"But don't wait long, dear. I am flying down-stairs to dress Rose Marshall, and then the fun will begin. Don't you want to know who will get the work prize? We are to be told that in the charade. I must not give hints or you will guess the word too quickly, and we have too few to guess as it is. I know well enough what little use nurse and Anne are at guessing charades. They say the word that comes into their heads, however unlikely it is. Don't you remember when we acted *Fanshawe* at Christmas; though we all had fans and fanned ourselves desperately, nurse could think of nothing to say but that she supposed we were pretending to be at a party? Do come down and be a sensible guesser, Flory."

"Well, I'll see," Flory answered, a good deal softened by this suggestion.

Rose ran down to the dressing-room and found her namesake no further advanced than when she had left her, but standing in rapt contemplation before a print of one of Scheffer's pictures which hung over the chimney-piece. A merry bustle of dressing and chattering and inventing speeches for the charade followed. All the little actors, with the exception of Mary Anne Sims, who, having only to act dumb show, was not to be released from imprisonment till the last minute, assembled in Mrs. Ingram's dressing-room; and while the young ladies were transforming themselves as much as possible by the aid of a collection of Chinese scarves and Japanese dressing-gowns, which Lucy had brought from over the way, Rose Ingram instructed Rose Marshall in the part she had to perform, and found her an apt pupil.

Florence, meanwhile, left alone in the nursery turned to the toy-cupboard, and, standing on tiptoe drew from the upper least-used shelf the red book she had concealed there among broken toys and torn picture-books. *Now* the opportunity she had long waited for offered of taking it down unobserved to the drawing-room, and replacing it in its proper niche on the book-shelf, from which no one appeared to have missed it all this while. The thought of creeping down to the drawing-room on a private errand, and then going in mamma's presence, and meeting her confiding look made Florence feel very mean and hateful to herself but "I will only do this one more deceitful thing," she thought, "this one, and then I shall have done with it all. I will never begin the least little bit of deception again as long as I live, once I get quite free

from this, and am able to put it quite out of my head." The gas was not yet lighted, and the passages were rather dim, but there was light enough in the drawing-room for Florence to make her way to the recess, without danger of stumbling over the numerous little tables and footstools that stood in the way. She thought the room empty when she entered it, but when she was opposite the window recess, she saw, with surprise, a figure with its back to her, close to the book-case, busy apparently in examining and handling the various ornaments that stood on its marble top. As Florence stood still she heard a click, and recognised the sound, caused by lifting one of the glass shades from their stands, and putting it back in its place again. She thought one of the girls, dressed up for acting, must have gone down to fetch the ivory egg from the safe place where Aunt Rachel kept it. How awkward it would be if she turned and saw her! Florence slipped behind a high-backed chair, her heart beating quickly at the thought of the shame she should feel if Rose or Maggie suddenly turned round on her, and found out her reason for coming there! How really sorry Rose would be, and what a talk and a wonderment Maggie would make about it. She need not have hidden herself, for the person, whoever it was, appeared equally anxious to get out of the room without being seen. Florence had left the door open, and Packer just that instant came and lit the gas-lamp on the drawing-room landing; the girl who was then creeping softly across the room, stood still at the sound of his footsteps, and waited—waited till he had passed on down the staircase to the lower hall, then she darted out of the door, and was gone in an instant. A ray of light had, however, fallen full on her face while she was standing still, and

Florence saw with surprise that it was neither Rose, Lucy, nor Maggie, dressed up for acting as she had supposed, but some one she had never seen before, a little girl about her own height, with a not over-clean face, and dullish dark hair, thrust untidily away under one of Anne's smart little afternoon caps. It was only for an instant that the light fell full on the face, but Florence saw it quite distinctly and could never forget it, or persuade herself, though she sometimes tried very hard to do so afterwards, that there could be any mistake about what she had seen. At the time, however, it did not appear a matter of any consequence, or at all likely to affect herself. When the coast was clear she went to the recess, replaced the book on its shelf, and left the room. She reached the upper landing without meeting any one, and was just passing the dressing-room door, when the little troop of actors burst out upon her. They were far too much occupied with their own looks and dress to ask her any awkward questions, though Rose seized her, and would not let her enter the school-room till she had given her opinion on the beauty of their disguises.

"Just look at Lucy now; should you have known her with her hair done up in that way, and the Chinese cap over it? We are going to pretend that she is a Japanese girl, sent over by missionaries to be educated at our school, and we have invited her to spend the holiday with us, because she has no friends in Europe. She is to speak broken English, and eat with chop-sticks. Lucy has been practising, and it's such fun. Maggie and Lilly, and I, are only common girls, but with long frocks you see and turned-up hair, and as nearly grown up as school-girls can be. Rose Marshall and Miss Anne Sims are our Sunday scholars and waiting-maids.

as well. Oh, by-the-way, where is Mary Anne Sims?—run, Lilly, and bring her from the housemaid's closet—how tired she must be of being shut up there.”

“Here she is, very glad to be let out—are you not?” cried Maggie, as the transformed Mary Anne and Lilly appeared together at the back staircase-door a minute afterwards.

“How nice Mary Anne looks in her brown dress,” answered Rose. “Stay, though, she has whitened it against that dreadful closet wall; let me dust her.”

A second delay was caused by some one recollecting that the ivory egg had still to be fetched from the drawing-room, and Rose offered to be the one to fetch it.”

“Go into the school-room and say we are *just* ready to begin, Florence,” entreated Maggie; but for some reason or other, which she could not quite explain to herself, Florence lingered, watching rather anxiously for Rose's return, and feeling a sort of surprised relief when her sister came back breathless, with the ivory egg safe in her hand, and proceeded to place it with the other eggs in a basket on Rose Marshall's arm. The little girl in the brown frock, whose face Florence recognised the instant her eyes rested on her, had been gratifying her curiosity by peeping about in the drawing-room, but apparently had not done any mischief to the precious ivory egg, though she had gone so far as to lift up the glass case to examine it more closely. Florence felt with shame that her tongue was tied. *She* could not call the little girl to account for prying where she had no right to go. How tiresome it was to have another secret to keep? It might not be an important one, but it made another subject on which she must be careful how she spoke. When one was guilty of a



deceitful act, did it always happen that the road to openness seemed afterwards to be shut away, and one's feet forced to stray into doubtful slippery paths? Florence asked herself this question, and her mind was distracted from enjoyment of the acting, by efforts to find a consolatory answer that would not come.

To everybody else the charade was a great success. Mrs. Ingram was not fatigued when all was over, though she laughed at Lucy's broken English, and admired the two Roses' pretty speeches to each other quite as heartily as did old Mrs. Fanshawe; while nurse and Anne went so far as to say that the breakfast party, when Lucy ate with chop-sticks, was more amusing than anything done by the clown in the pantomime they saw at Christmas. What was meant to have been the great point of the performance, however, the giving away of the ivory egg, fell a little flat, and had the effect of bringing the charade to a hasty conclusion. Mrs. Fanshawe could not change her part from spectator to actor as readily as was required; and when Rose presented the dish to her, and she had to choose out the valuable egg and give it away, she unfortunately forgot that the Japanese lady was a perfect stranger to her, and made an inappropriate speech, as she handed the prize to Lucy, about her distress at having to award Lady Dunallan's beautiful present to a member of her own family, instead of to one of the children of the house. Maggie called out, "Lucy is not your grand-daughter—she is a Japanese;" but it was too late, the spell was broken, and Rose, Aunt Rachel, and Mrs. Ingram dropping all further pretence, came up to Lucy to kiss her, and congratulate her on her success. Mrs. Fanshawe was anxious to prove to everybody that the superior neatness of Lucy's work had left her no choice

but to vote in her favour; and Mary Anne Sims was called up before Mrs. Ingram to have her various garments inspected over again, and their tucks and hems compared with similar portions of Rose Marshall's attire; and while this was going on Professor Ingram returned with Claude and Lionel from an entertainment, to which he had taken his sons; and everybody discovered that it was late, and that Mrs. Ingram ought to have been in her room, and the little ones in their beds, an hour ago. Lucy Fanshawe slipped the ivory egg into her pocket, without so much as opening it (possibly to spare Maggie's feelings), and good-naturedly set herself to work to clear away the stage properties and help Rose in packing up Rose Marshall's old clothes and the presents from the "mother's-bag," which had till now been forgotten by everybody, and left scattered about on the attic stairs. The York Rose came out to receive her treasures as soon as Mrs. Fanshawe released her, and found an opportunity of telling her namesake a piece of news about herself which seemed important enough to have been mentioned in an earlier part of the evening, if there had not been so many other interesting things to talk about.

"Please, miss, I've left school now, and I'm going for a servant."

"A servant! Why, Rose, you are not so big as I am, and I shan't have done with school for years and years."

"I'm going of thirteen, and mother says that's fully old enough. She went out at eleven, and stayed in one place till she married, miss."

"And you mean to do the same?"

"I don't think I shall ever be worth as much as mother. I'm afraid not, miss; but the young lady is

very kind to me. Oh, I do like her; and I would like to live with her till I'm grown up."

"Do you mean that you have got a place, Rose—that you are a servant now?"

"Since Sunday, miss. It's the other young lady that comes to the hospital; the one that Mary Anne told you about. She's been very ill, and can't get out no more; and her father he gives her leave to have two little girls out of the school to come every day to the house and learn to be servants. One's to be in the kitchen—that's Mary Anne Sims, miss—and one's to help to do the rooms, and wait on the young lady, and that's me, miss; and please, miss, I was chosen because 'the Sisters' said I was to be trusted upstairs not to touch her things, miss; and mother was pleased when she heard it said, but father—he's that proud of us all—he said that if he thought 'a child of his could touch what did not belong to 'em, he'd be fit to kill 'em,' miss."

"Oh, dear!" Rose Ingram could not help exclaiming. "But that was an uncomfortable thing to say by way of showing his pride in you. However, of course, none of you ever will touch what does not belong to you, so you need not mind it. Do you live altogether at the young lady's?"

"I come home every night, miss; and Mary Anne Sims is to live with us now. Since father got into better work we've gone into a larger set of rooms, and Mary Anne and I have a little room to ourselves, with a good bed and a chest of drawers in it."

"And you like waiting on that young lady?"

"Oh, I do. Sometimes she lets me read to her, and she has such pretty books; and though I broke a bottle of medicine the first day I came, along of being so startled when a box that stood by the bedside began to

play music all on a sudden, she was not a bit angry. I hope I shall never do anything to vex her. She lies on her bed all day, and has a deal of pain to bear."

"Then that is the reason why her father has left off coming here, and why he has never invited me, as he promised he would. Perhaps when the young lady gets a little better he will send for me to come and see her, and then I shall see you too, Rose."

"I shall look for you, miss; and to-morrow, if my young lady is well enough, I will tell her all about to-night. I know she'll like to hear it."

"There is Aunt Rachel calling us. Good-night, dear Rose." And seeing no one near, except Florence, who had paused in the passage on her way to bed in the nursery, to listen to what was going on, Rose Ingram surprised her namesake with a hasty kiss.

She looked rather suspiciously at Florence afterwards to see if she was laughing at her, and was struck by a distressed look on her face. "Is anything the matter, Florence?" she asked, as they walked down the passage together; "you look so queer and white. What have you been doing to yourself?"

"Nothing; but I wish people would not say such horrid things?"

"What sort of horrid things?"

"Such as Rose Marshall said about her father; that if any of his children ever touched anything that did not belong to them, he would be fit to kill them."

"But they none of them ever will touch what does not belong to them any more than we shall; so why trouble yourself? Have we not had a happy evening, Flo? Has not everything turned out delightfully?"

They had reached the nursery door by this time, so Florence was not obliged to answer.

## CHAPTER XVII.

## PERPLEXITY.

SCHOOL work began again with great regularity, and was for once welcome to everybody, since it secured without effort the quiet in the house that had to be struggled after in the holidays. Rose saw less of her sisters, and of Lucy Fanshawe, from being promoted into a new class at the college, and was obliged to be content with such scraps of news on old topics as could be picked up in the English-speaking intervals allowed for hand-washing, hair-brushing, and running up and down stairs, in the school-room children's busy days. It was actually not till the second morning after the Charade that she found time to ask,—

“By the way, how does Lucy Fanshawe like the ivory egg? Does she wear it fastened to her belt, as Lady Dunallan did, or carry it in her pocket? I dare say she told you at the class yesterday afternoon.”

“Not a word,” said Maggie. “I don't know whether she thinks I grudge it her, but she has not mentioned it to any one in the class. I am sure she need not be so careful; she is quite welcome to it for me. I don't think I should have liked the trouble of taking care of it.”

“Perhaps Lucy does not,” suggested Lilly; “or perhaps Mrs. Fanshawe has put it away. When I asked her to show it me, and put my hand on her pocket to feel if it was there, she shook me off, and told me not to be inquisitive, for I should hear more than enough about that tiresome egg by-and-by.”

"How odd of Lucy," cried Rose. "What more can there be for us to hear about it?"

Press of business put the wonder quite out of her mind during the afternoon; but it recurred to her again when she came back to the school-room just before tea, from her music lesson, and found Aunt Rachel seated by the work-table, with Maggie and Lucy standing before her.

"Come here, Rose," Aunt Rachel said; "I want to ask you a few questions about last Tuesday evening, when you acted that Charade."

"What is wrong, Aunt Rachel—has anything happened?"

"Nay," said Aunt Rachel, "I want you to answer my questions, not to ask them; and please, dear Rose, be careful how you speak. Can you recollect exactly enough how many hands the ivory egg passed between leaving the drawing-room and being taken from the table by Mrs. Fanshawe?"

"Easily, Aunt Rachel: nobody could have touched it but myself and Rose Marshall. I put it into the little basket myself, just before I came into the school-room, and covered it over, and I am sure the covering had not been touched when Rose gave it back to me."

"And you took the egg out of the basket afterwards and put it on the dish yourself?"

"Well, no, Aunt Rachel, I had not time; I was busy rubbing up Lucy's feet, to make her hobble like a Japanese lady, and I told Rose Marshall to take the eggs from the basket and put them on the little table."

"Was she alone in the passage at the time?"

"For a minute or two. There was no harm, was there, Aunt Rachel? We were obliged to send Mary

Anne Sims into the school-room first to arrange the breakfast-table."

"Had you spoken about the ivory egg in Rose Marshall's presence? Did she know what was inside?"

"We were all talking about it at tea, but I don't remember exactly what was said. I think I asked her if she had ever seen a gold thimble, and if she did not think it would be very nice to work with one?"

"My dear Rose, how could you be so silly?"

"But why, Aunt Rachel? I thought she would be so pleased to know that one of us had gained a prize of a gold thimble, by making clothes for her and her sisters, and she did seem very much pleased; she said she had always thought it was only queens and princesses that worked with gold thimbles, and that she would like to see one of all things."

"Dear! dear! How sorry I am that I ever trusted so many little chatterboxes to consort together."

"But why—but why, Aunt Rachel? Do tell me what harm I have done!"

"Not you, my child; but wait one moment more before I explain. I should like to know if anyone present was struck by any circumstance during the evening. Chance observations sometimes throw light on puzzling cases; and if anyone remembers anything, now is the time to speak out. You were all scattered here, there, and everywhere throughout the evening, and I should think nothing could have passed without some one seeing."

"All of us except Florence," observed Rose. "Florence stayed in the school-room quietly the whole evening."

Florence, who had risen from her seat in a far corner of the room, while Aunt Rachel was speaking,

sat down again as Rose said this, and took up a book and held it before her face.

"Did either of the little girls from the Models go to the drawing-room alone?" questioned Aunt Rachel again.

"Oh no, Aunt Rachel," volunteered Maggie. "I took Mary Anne Sims to the drawing-room door just before we dressed her, and let her peep at all the pretty things; but we did not go beyond the door-mat."

"And after she was dressed what became of her?"

"We took her to the housemaid's closet, and shut her up there till we wanted her."

"And did not you see the dust on her dress?" cried Lilly, "which showed she had been crouching against the wall, as one does when one stays in that closet till one is tired."

"You are sure that Mary Anne was not alone with the egg near her during any part of the evening?"

"Quite sure," said Maggie, eagerly; "for I took care of her, except just when she was bolted up in the housemaid's closet."

"You bolted the door?"

"We always do bolt the door when we shut people in there; it is our regular prison, and at any rate we know she stayed there."

"You are all of the same opinion?"

No one spoke, but Florence let the book she was reading fall on the floor with a clatter that caused all heads to be turned in her direction.

"You can't help us, Florence," said Maggie. "You know less than any of us what happened on that evening, for you were shut up in the school-room all the time."

"Florence may take an interest in what we are



talking about, though, as well as the rest of you," said Aunt Rachel, kindly. "Unhappily the news I have to tell is only painful. A very disagreeable thing has occurred. The gold thimble is missing from the ivory egg; and as Lucy discovered her loss when she took the egg out of her pocket on undressing that same night, we fear that some one must have taken it away during the acting. Lucy supposed at first that one of you children had taken it away to play a trick on her, and did not mention it to her grandmother till the middle of the next day. Mrs. Fanshawe was, however, uneasy, fearing disturbance to your mother, and wrote to me, desiring Lucy to be silent on the subject till I came; this is the first moment I have been able to leave grandmamma, and now I appeal to you all seriously—can any of you throw any light on this painful subject? if so, speak before I take the sad story to the Models and question Rose Marshall and Mary Anne Sims!"

"Aunt Rachel! you will never do that," cried Rose. "Why, Rose Marshall told me that very evening that her father would be fit to kill his children if he thought they would touch what did not belong to them. You can't think Rose would do such a thing, you can't, Aunt Rachel?"

"My dear, I don't want to think it; but you have said yourself that no one could have touched the egg during the acting but Rose Marshall, and your father knows the thimble was in its place when he left the house half-an-hour before your play began, for he had pointed it out to a visitor. The next person who touched the egg was yourself, Rose, and you passed it on to Rose Marshall."

"Oh, how I wish I had not said so! how I wish I

ould recollect anything else. I am sure my Rose never ouches it. I would sooner believe anything than that he is the guilty person."

"But you must not try to make yourself or any one lse believe anything that really did not take place.

can't bear to have my opinion of Rose Marshall owered, but we must not let our liking for her make is unjust to other people. It would be very hard on Mary Anne Sims if we tried to fix suspicion on her, ecause she is not such a favourite with us as Rose Marshall, or even because we fancy she would be the most ready to yield to temptation. It would be ruin o her to be suspected, because she has no friends to ake her part, and no previous character for good onduct to fall back upon, and the friends who have aken her up, with many misgivings, would almost ertainly let her drop if doubts as to her honesty were aised just now. We must be careful not to mislead urselves into suspecting her without reason, merely rom friendship to Rose."

"And really, and truly, I took care of her, Aunt Rachel," said Maggie; "I am sure I don't want Rose Marshall to prove the thief, but all the same I am as ure as can be that it was not Mary Anne Sims."

"And of course," said Aunt Rachel, slowly looking rom one to another, "no one of you four girls eddled with the egg—the boys I know were out that vening. If any of you did—if you know of any ccident that, through your own or any one's carelessness, occurred—I hope you will come forward now and cknowledge it, and save two poor girls from suspicions hat will be most hurtful to them. A good start in life as been given them by a young lady no older than me of you; you would not like to spoil their chance

through shrinking from taking any blame due to yourselves?"

There was a murmur of voices all together, Rose's the loudest and clearest.

"Oh, no, Aunt Rachel, that we would not for the world; but, indeed, we know nothing."

"I wish I did," Rose continued alone. "I wish I could think I had meddled with the egg, and lost the thimble; would not I give anything to find it in this house."

Florence, who had now come from her corner and joined the group round the work-table, here seized Rose's hand nervously, and gave it a violent squeeze. Rose took this movement for a mark of sympathy, and whispered back, "I wish you had been with us that night, Flory; you are so much quicker than I am, and see everything, I daresay you would have been able to prove that my Rose was not the thief."

"Don't," said Florence, withdrawing her hand and shrinking away. "It is a shame; why should you wish to put the blame on to the other girl who has no friends?"

"But I don't," cried Rose, surprised: "what makes you say that?"

"Well," observed Aunt Rachel, after a moment's pause, "if no one has anything more to tell me, I must go."

"Where, Aunt Rachel? what are you going to do?" asked Rose, anxiously.

"I am going back to Mrs. Fanshawe first, to tell her the result of my conversation with you, and then when I have consulted with your father, I think I must go to the Models and speak to Mrs. Marshall."

"Oh, Aunt Rachel, must you? how dreadful! Can you not wait for a day or two?"

"No, my dear, I think not. If this must be spoken about, the sooner the better. Delay would only make it harder to come at the truth! The truest kindness to the offender, whoever she may be, is to search out her fault and bring it to swift punishment. If Rose Marshall's love of out-of-the-way pretty things, excited by your description of the goldt himble, has led her into temptation, and she has yielded to it in a moment of excitement, I have no doubt she has repented since and will be glad to have an opportunity for confession given to her. Her remark about her father strikes me as likely to have been suggested by an uneasy conscience. Was it made before or after the acting, by the way, Rose?"

"After; but, oh indeed, Aunt Rachel, if you would let me tell you the whole conversation, you would see it came in quite naturally. Oh dear! how unlucky I am, to have said the very things I ought not to have said, so as to make what I don't believe to be true seem true."

"You have told us the facts as they happened, my dear, and that is what you were bound to do. Now, I must go. The Fräulein will not thank me for coming. I have done worse than hinder study for half-an-hour. I fear I have made it hard for you to give your minds to your work for all the rest of the evening; but take my advice and do your best; you won't mend the wrong that has been done by talking it over to the neglect of our proper business. You will only help it to grow a little larger and spread out new roots. Unless there is something to be done, silence about wrong-doing is always best."

Florence won a little praise at the end of the day from the Fräulein for having been the only one among the school-room party who had acted on Miss Ingram's recommendation, and steadily followed the usual course

of employment without interrupting herself and everybody else with recollections of "that evening," and by jumping up every ten minutes or so to begin a fresh frantic search for the gold thimble in some place where it was just remembered it might possibly have fallen, if only something had happened which no one believed actually to have occurred.

Rose, who had been the worst offender in the matter of searching, and who had felt provoked by Florence's indifference, forgave her at night, when it came out quite by accident that she was grieving over the bad news more deeply than any one else.

Maggie had fallen asleep, and nurse had taken away the light, and Rose, in the act of trying to recall exactly how the ivory egg looked in the dish, after Rose Marshall had touched it, was gradually gliding into slumber too, when she was startled wide awake again by a deep sob from Florence's bed. In a minute she was up and leaning over her sister.

"What is the matter? are you dreaming, Flory dear? Why, your face and hair are quite wet with crying! Shall I call nurse?"

"No, no, no; let me alone," sobbed Florence.

"But what is the matter, dear?"

"I am so unhappy," sobbed Florence.

"Tell me all about it. What were you thinking of?"

Florence now sat up in bed, put her wet hair from her forehead, and propped her elbows on her knees, as if she were preparing for a long talk.

"I was thinking of what Aunt Rachel said about a wrong thing growing and putting out roots, so that one never feels one can get away from it again. It is quite true, and it is just the same whether one talks

about it or tries to forget it; it won't be forgotten, it grows and grows, and one does not know what to do."

Rose was impressed and a good deal frightened by the excitement in Florence's tones of voice, and by the odd appearance of the white-robed figure huddled up on the bed. None of the children but Florence would have remembered what Aunt Rachel said, and made more of it, and brooded over it in this way, and Rose had an idea that mamma and nurse were always anxious to divert Florence's mind from distressing topics.

"It is very nice of you, Florence," she said, in a soothing tone, "to care so much about my namesake's trouble. I love you for it, and it makes me feel as if you and I were friends in this thing above the others; but I don't think you ought to talk about it any more to-night, or make yourself so very unhappy. You know you have really less to do with it than anybody in the house. You did not invent the Charade or help in it, and all the evening you were safe out of the way of hearing or seeing anything. If any one is to blame, it can't be you. So do go to sleep, dear."

"No, no; I want you to stay and talk, Rose. I want to tell you something more."

"Had we not better wait till morning?"

"I shall not want to tell you in the morning."

"Be quick then, dear," said Rose, a little reluctantly.

But instead of being quick, Florence fell into another sobbing fit, and before it was over nurse appeared with a candle, sent Rose off to her own little bed, and retucking Florence firmly into hers, ordered her to go to sleep at once without any more nonsense, under pain of a dose of medicine and a mustard plaister at the back of her neck.

## CHAPTER XVIII.

## THE GOLD THIMBLE AND FALSE WITNESS.

"I WOULD not be such a greedy thing as you, Ma Anne Sims, not for nothink, I wouldn't."

"Well, take a bit and taste it then, it just as good as this shaky white stuff is. I'll go shares if you like. I ain't a greedy thing."

A brisk spring shower was falling, filling the gutters of the streets and making pools in which the lamp-light was reflected as brightly as on the January afternoon that first introduced us to the neighbourhood. Two little girls, sheltered by a great green cotton umbrella, were picking their way along the wet pavement, one holding the heavy umbrella with both hands as she walked and talked, the other stooping her head towards a dingy pocket, from which dingy fingers conveyed every second or two something to her lips.

"There, come now, take a bit; I ain't a greedy thing," she said, poking a lump of a soft white substance under her companion's nose. It smelt good, but Rose Marshall, the first speaker, turned her head away.

"No, thank you, I'll have none of it. I had my supper before we came out, and I know when I've had enough. I was not thinking of myself when I said 'greedy thing,' but of mother, whose appetite's so bad, and of Teddy and the little uns. Not that mother would take anything you brought her, Mary Anne Sims, unless she was very sure how you came by it, and you may say what you like about cook giving you all them tit-bits and dainties, but she never give

nothing of the kind to me, as runs her errands and helps her to wash up more to her mind than ever you do, and who would take it all home to mother, and not eat it up by myself like a greedy pig. That's the young lady's 'blanc-manger' you are eating this minute, Mary Anne Sims, and I never will believe that cook 'ud give such as that to you. I doubt you slipped it off the plate as come downstairs from her bed-room this afternoon, and that's picking and stealing, the same we've to keep our hands from in the Catechism."

"Thank you for making me out to be a thief, Rose Marshall. It is very kind of you, just because I've things give to me as you'd like to have give to you to take 'ome. I would not be you to 'ave such a bad heart as that and tell lies against a poor orphant girl as 'as no friend. I should a-thought that was going against the Catechism."

"I don't tell no lies, Mary Anne Sims, and I ain't against you," cried the York Rose, losing her temper and speaking hastily it must be confessed ; "I said it for a warning, and I say again that I would not be you to carry things about in my pocket that I was ashamed to let people know of. Yes, you do, Mary Anne Sims, and this is not the first time—you know it ain't. The night we came home from Mrs. Ingram's you was afraid to show us what you'd got in your pocket, and you pushed Teddy against the wall because he asked if you'd anything for him there, and wanted to put his hand in to find out."

"I did not then, and you'd better not tell no more such lies of me," cried Mary Anne, turning round on Rose sharply, and with an anxious look on her face. "You want to get me turned off, you do, and all my nice things took from me, and me sent to starve in the



streets, because you're so grand now with your father and mother, you're ashamed of being seen with me, and you want to ruin me, and I did not think you'd such a bad heart, Rose Marshall, as to tell tales and ruin a poor girl as never had no luck till now."

The quarrel which had risen to a more serious height than any of the other little squabbles in which the little fellow-servants had indulged since their joint service began, was here happily interrupted by their arrival at the end of their walk. Rose turned at the foot of the general staircase to scrape her feet and shake the rain-drops from her umbrella. Before the quarrel with Mary Anne Sims began, she had been making a happy plan in her mind of taking her copy of "Alice in Wonder Land" to Mrs. Johnstone's rooms that evening, and displaying its beauties to Reuben and his sister, and she thought it prudent not to risk her welcome by giving Mrs. Johnstone any occasion of complaint against her for untidy habits. Mary Anne, who had never dreamed of such a distinction as being allowed to visit the Johnstones, and who rather enjoyed aggravating the bettermost lodgers, ran on without troubling herself as to the state of her shoes, and only paused at the door of Mrs. Marshall's room to wipe her sticky fingers on the wet ends of her shawl lest Mrs. Marshall should see something suspicious there, and ask inconvenient questions. The sitting-room door stood ajar, and Mary Anne Sims's habits did not allow her to omit peeping in before she entered. There was talking going on inside, a lady's voice, and a lady's figure (Miss Ingram's) occupied the best chair. Mary Anne felt very glad she had had the prudence to pause at the door before going in. Miss Ingram had just finished speaking and now Mrs. Marshall was answering her.

Of course, miss," she was saying, "there is not a e in the house I should not wish you to search. r what you have said, Marshall and me, we should be satisfied if you did not search every corner; but a child of ours taking what did not belong to 'em, robbing those that 'ave been kind to 'em too, is t I can't believe possible. I think I may say, Miss am, that their father would rather see any of them eir graves than 'ave such a thing proved against , he's that proud of them. I don't say as you ain't t to come here and inquire, but if it's my Rose suspect, Miss Ingram, you'll find you've mistook greatly, ma'am, and been misinformed altogether." I hope so indeed, Mrs. Marshall, but I wish to nine both the little girls impartially; and I assure I am as anxious as you can be that they may be to prove their innocence."

ose was coming up-stairs now, and would be in t in another minute. Mary Anne remembered she just that minute in which to do something she had kly resolved to do. She crept noiselessly past the ng-room door and entered a little sleeping-room. n a nail in the door of this room hung a purple s. Mary Anne thrust her hand down to the bottom er pocket, drew out a parcel wrapt in a page of opey-book, and slipped it into the pocket of this s, then she crept out again, and was standing close e sitting-room door when Rose appeared at the . of the long staircase.

Miss Ingram's in there, talking to your mother," aid in a whisper, when Rose came up.

Miss Ingram! Oh I am glad," cried Rose, restored ood humour at once; but there was something in tone of voice in which her mother now called,

"Come in, girls, at once, if you're there!" that check her joy, and caused her to enter with a grave instead of a smiling face.

"Come here, child," her mother said, a little sharp and coldly. "Come here and speak to Miss Ingram there is something she wants to ask you about."

Mrs. Marshall's head was held up, and the corners her mouth dropped down in a way that told Rose something was very wrong indeed, and made her little heart begin to beat quickly.

"Rose," Miss Ingram began, "I want you to tell exactly all you remember about that ivory egg, with gold thimble inside, that my niece left in your chamber for a little while last Tuesday evening."

Miss Ingram looked Rose full in the face while she spoke, and, as sometimes happens to perfectly innocent persons who feel themselves suspected, Rose changed countenance visibly and painfully.

"That—that pretty white egg as is a work-l inside?" she stammered.

"Yes, Rose, you know quite well what I mean; the gold thimble which was inside it when little Mary Ingram gave it into your hands was discovered to be missing at the end of the evening, and we are inquiring of all those who are known to have touched the egg during the evening to find out who has meddled with the thimble. It could not have got out of the egg unless some one had not taken it out, you know, Rose; and we hope that the guilty person, whoever she may be, will confess her fault voluntarily before it is proved against her."

"Oh, Miss Ingram——"

Rose paused, a tumult of thoughts rushed into her mind; first came a suspicion which was almost a certain

though she had nothing to ground it on, and then a full understanding of all the little circumstances that seemed to point *her* out as the thief; and instead, of finishing her sentence she threw her apron over her head and burst into a vehement flood of tears. Her mother was so provoked and frightened that she could not help taking her by the shoulders and giving her a hearty shaking.

"Rose, Rose, whatever are you thinking of? to stand there crying like a silly instead of speaking up and clearing yourself. Whatever would father say if he could see you! he'd be fit to knock yer head off, so vexed he'd be at your having so little spirit. Speak out at once, child, and tell the lady you never touched the thing she's asking about."

"I didn't! I didn't! Oh! I didn't, Miss Ingram!— Oh! mother——" but the words were sobbed out from under the depths of Rose's apron, and somehow had not at all a satisfactory or truthful ring with them in Miss Ingram's ears. She sat looking from the sobbing Rose to her indignant mother for a minute or two, and then said sorrowfully but firmly,—

"I am afraid, Mrs. Marshall, there is nothing for it now but an examination of the little girls' pockets, and the places where they keep their treasures. You won't feel satisfied now unless this is done."

"No, ma'am, that I sha'n't, nor after it is made and you've found nothing neither, unless Rose can pluck up a little more spirit, and convince you that it's just downheartedness, and not anything on her conscience, that makes her act so foolish."

"Oh, mother!" Rose began again; but her face only emerged for a second from her apron, and then went down again, while indistinct murmurs came up of, "Oh

dear! the young lady as 'as been so kind to me, that ever she should think such a thing of me! Oh dear!"

"Well, Rose, I am afraid no good will be done by your talking in that way. You had better bring me your workbox, and the dress you wore on the evening you spent at Mrs. Ingram's house. Or stay, your mother may bring them, and you shall have time to recover yourself, and think quietly whether there is anything you would like to say to me before the search begins."

Teddy, Susie, and Polly, were now standing round in a circle staring defiantly at Miss Ingram, and at the weeping Rose, and nothing but the sound of her sobs was to be heard in the room, till Mrs. Marshall came back, laden with all the possessions of the two little girls.

"I've emptied the box they 'ave between 'em to keep their clothes in, and the little closet in the wall; but you'll please to come and look yourself, and search every inch of the room before you go, Miss Ingram," she said huffily.

"If you wish it, I certainly will, Mrs. Marshall, and you will stand by and help me, and forgive me all the trouble I am causing, I hope. I do believe this searching is as painful almost to me as it is to you. That is the work-box you received as a prize at school when you left at Easter, is it not Rose?"

"Yes, miss," said Rose, brightening up a little. "I am sure you're welcome to look at it, and at everything I have; it's locked, but the key is in the pocket of my purple dress that mother has got over her arm, I slipped it in this morning as I was leaving the house, for fear Teddy should get at my needles and things."

As Rose spoke, Mrs. Marshall threw down an arm

load of odds and ends before Miss Ingram, and then, shaking out the purple dress, proceeded to turn out its pocket; first came a crumpled pocket-handkerchief, then a bit of seed-cake, then a hymn-book, then the work-box key, last of all a sheet of dirty writing-paper, twisted tight round something.

"Sweets left after your Sunday class, I'm afraid, Rose," Miss Ingram said, picking up the little parcel, as Mrs. Marshall let it fall from her fingers.

"I am sure I did not know as I had any," sobbed Rose, while Teddy pressed a little nearer, and fixed greedy eyes on the parcel. The unpacking took a minute or two, for a considerable quantity of thread was twisted round the ends of the paper.

Miss Ingram's face grew graver and graver, as she turned it over and over. "It does not feel like sweets; there is something hard and round inside." As she spoke the last thread gave way, and the gold thimble rolled out upon the floor of the room. Mrs. Marshall gave a great cry at the sight, as if she had been shot; and Rose, after staring at the thimble for a minute with wide-open frightened eyes, sat down on the ground, with her apron over her head, and cried worse than ever.

"I don't—oh, indeed, Miss Ingram, I don't know how it came there!" she managed to sob out at last, in a strangled voice.

"Hush, Rose," Miss Ingram said, rather sternly. "I can't listen to any further denials now. You are only making the matter worse. Look at the paper in which the thimble is wrapped. Your own hand-writing. The very last hymn I gave you to write out before you left school."

Rose lifted up her head almost mechanically, and

looking, felt seized with despair, as if everything were against her. She had taken such pains with that writing—such pains that even through her tears she could read the verse written on the least crumpled part of the paper, and now for it to be a witness against her—

“The hosts of God encamp around  
The dwellings of the just;  
Deliverance He affords to all  
Who on His succour trust.”

Somebody knew the truth then. It might be ever such a puzzle how that thimble got into her pocket, and why circumstances should point her out as a thief, when she knew she was innocent. But He knew it too. It all lay clear before His All-Seeing eye, and to the bright Hosts encamped around those who fear Him, and He could make it clear to everybody whenever He pleased. Rose's heart grew quieter and less despairing as this thought arose. She wiped her eyes with her apron, and turned to her mother.

“Oh, mother,” she said, “you don't think as I am a thief, do you?”

Mrs. Marshall had picked up the gold thimble and put it on the end of her finger and was looking angrily at it.

“Think,” she said slowly, in answer to poor Rose's appeal, “to think that a child of mine should have took such a thing as this that did not belong to her! Oh Rose, Rose! I'd rather never have come out of the hospital. I'd have all the pain I suffered over again not to see this here.”

“Mother! mother! I don't know how ever it comes to be here. Oh, mother, do look at me,” cried Rose, half rising from the floor; but Mrs. Marshall kept her

eyes fixed on the thimble, sorrowfully shaking her head as she looked, and Rose threw herself down and had recourse to the apron again to hide her face. It was very hard, very bitter; why had such a trial come to her? How should she ever bear it? She would not bear it. She would turn the pain she was suffering herself on another person. She would speak out what she suspected, and tell all the ill she knew of her little fellow-servant, so as to make Miss Ingram see how much more likely it was that Mary Anne should be the guilty one. If she only searched her memory, she could remember plenty of bad things to tell of Mary Anne that would set every one against her. Little things, to be sure, that had nothing to do with this charge, but why not bring them forward when it might lead to herself being cleared? If Mary Anne were proved guilty, she would be turned out of the house at once and lose the good chance of learning better that had been given to her; but then, even that would not be so hard for her, Rose thought as she felt this terrible pain of being suspected, she who had been used to be praised by mother and Sunday-school teacher, as the best child in the house, the best girl in the class. She would not be put down from that high place for any one; rather than that, she would drag some one else down ever so low—and yet, and yet—if He knew, was it not better to leave it all to Him? Would evil-speaking and tale-bearing make things really better? Would it not rather be taking her cause out of His hands? Who could make her innocence as clear as the noon-day when He chose, and spare the guilty person too, perhaps, by bringing her to repentance and confession?

Rose's new little mistress had been busied all day



whenever she was well enough to sit up in bed, illuminating a text; the words were: "Be still and know that I am God." Rose saw them before her eyes as she sat with her apron over her face, and it was almost as if some one had laid a hand gently on her lips and bade her keep silence.

In a minute or two Miss Ingram spoke, again in dressing, not Rose, but Mrs. Marshall: "I am very sorry for you, Mrs. Marshall, very sorry, and I think the best thing I can do, now this matter is so far cleared up, is to leave you and Rose alone together. No word of mine will make her feel the seriousness of her fall so keenly as the sight of the pain it causes you and her father. I will call and see her on Sunday before the class, for I hardly think it will be right for her to take her usual place there. I must ask advice on that point and let you know. I fear, too, I must speak to Mr. Daubeney: she has placed Rose in a position of trust, and, grieved as I shall be to do it, I fear I must warn her to keep Rose out of the way of further temptation till we can hope she is more able to resist it. And now, Rose, before I go and leave you to your mother, I will say one word as your Sunday-school teacher. I know you will be disposed to grieve most bitterly over the loss of reputation; you have been somewhat proud

to think, lately of the way in which you have been singled out and noticed, and trusted; you will be tempted to put the loss of your good name, and of the favour you have won, above everything else; but remember, this is in reality the least part of what you have to sorrow for. Try to look at your sin, not as it will appear to Rose Ingram, but as it will show in the sight of God, and of His holy angels."

To Miss Ingram's surprise, Rose drew her apron from

her face, and looking full at her as she finished speaking, said: "Thank you, teacher, I will try to do that."

It was a word of comfort to Rose indeed, and lightened the pain about her heart. Perhaps she had been growing proud of so much success, and of that pretty young lady's talking to her like an equal friend. Perhaps she had been thinking too much of people's caring and not enough about God's, and now all other favour was taken away in order to throw her upon His—the real, lasting, unfailing Love!

Miss Ingram went away a good deal puzzled by a remembrance of Rose's last, humble, truthful look, contradicting as it did her previous impressions, and making her more hopeful about Rose than facts seemed to warrant. The facts had to be told, however, to those who were waiting anxiously for news of the visit, and in the face of such plain strong proofs of guilt her kinder thoughts only gave moderate comfort to Rose Marshall's crestfallen namesake.

Rose Marshall's mother was far too much shocked and agitated to observe looks and signs, or to be able to judge of the sincerity of the denials in which Rose persisted during a long and painful conversation that followed Miss Ingram's departure. She did not mean to be hard upon her gentle little daughter, but she had always more or less been frightened at, and foreboded evil from her studious habits and dreamy ways of going about. And now when something much worse than she had ever dreamed of appeared to have come of Rose's unlikeness to other children, she thought it her duty to let her see the full extent of her dismay and grief; and seemed to poor Rose, to be showing, not only that she believed her guilty now, but that she had never

really been easy about her, never really trusted her, in all the time when she had been so happy and confidently thought herself her mother's right hand.

A gleam of comfort came for poor Rose from the quarter whence she expected hardest measure. Her mother kept on saying all the evening that she dreaded father's coming home, and did not know how she should frame her mouth to tell him what had happened, yet when he did appear late, and she in her nervousness poured the story out upon him before he had well entered the room, he heard it with greater calmness than any one expected.

"Come here, child, Rose," he said, when his wife had finished her complaint; "come here and look me in the face and tell me the truth. I'm your father, child, though maybe I've not always been the father I ought to have been; but don't be afraid to speak out the truth to me now. Did you take that 'ere trinket yer mother's making all that hullabaloo about?"

"I didn't, father—I didn't, indeed."

"Then nobody, not even yer mother, had better no say before me again that ye did. Ye've been a good child to me, and I'll stand by yer. Mother, she never told us a lie in her life that I know on, and we've a right to believe her now, I say, let other folk chatter what pleases 'em. We've the best right to know and believe our own child. Come, dry yer eyes, both of you, and set out the supper, and let us hear no more about it."

Mrs. Marshall shook her head, knowing that more would certainly be heard about it, and having reason to fear that her husband's temper would not hold out against all the disagreeables she foresaw, but she never contradicted him, and though she looked grave and sad, she made no further allusion to the subject. And

Rose got a warm kiss from her father when a few moments later her mother sent her to bed.

Mary Anne Sims was very talkative, and very loud in her anger against Miss Ingram, and in her exhortations to Rose not to mind whatever anybody said, while the little girls were putting themselves to bed in their tiny closet sleeping-place. Rose did not answer a word till after she had said her prayers, and the two had got into bed, and then she spoke a word or two to her companion in a low tender voice that somehow or other found a way into depths of Mary Anne's dull heart that had never been reached before.

"I wish, Mary Anne," she said, "that you would promise me to-night never to take anything again that don't belong to you. I know you do take things, and you see I've said nothing about it, but I wish you'd promise me never to do it again."

"Why, what business is it of yours, Rose Marshall, what I do? Why should you care?"

"It is a deal to me; I care a deal, and I wish you'd promise. I seem to see to-night how bad it must be to have done such a thing as Miss Ingram thinks I've done, and for God to know, and I'm frightened for you, dear."

"You haven't no need to be, then," said Mary Anne, gruffly; but as she turned away her head to bury it as well as she could in the flock pillow, the guardian angels watching round the dingy bed were rejoiced by the sight of a tear, the first tear of penitence, shining in the hard eyes of the orphan whose childhood had known no softness or tenderness, and to whom awe and compunction had hitherto been quite unknown feelings.

## CHAPTER XIX.

## SNOW IN HARVEST.

"SNOW in harvest:" the words occurred in the morning reading, and Rose Ingram, as she collected the Bible in which she and her sisters had read the lessons for the day, to put them away before she sat down to breakfast, could not help repeating them over and over to herself. "Snow in harvest"—sorrow in summer—sorrow when one is young and might be so happy; how well the words stood for that experience, and how well Rose thought she understood it herself just then.

It was the middle of June by this time. The school-room windows stood wide open, and all the London summer sounds and cries were heard without—sounds that country people find so discordant, and that London children hail, as their country contemporaries hail the lark's song and the cuckoo's call from the meadow. Dearly as Rose had always loved them, they gave her no pleasure this year; they only brought a pang of dull pain to her heart as she remembered how joyful she had welcomed the organ-boy with his monkey, who always played in the square of a summer evening when he first appeared last year, and how, when strawberries were first cried in the streets, a twelvemonth ago, the boys had broken bounds, and rushed down to the drawing-room to beg mamma to send Packer out to buy a basket for the school-room tea. Carts filled with baskets of ripe red fruit, and others, where roses in pots nodded to tall arums and geraniums in full bloom, were making their way with much cheerful shouting

across the square, but an appeal to mamma for leave to purchase any of these treasures was the last thing that the least considerate child in the house would think of doing now. All, down to Trotty and Tiny, had learned that voices must be hushed and footsteps guarded all over the house, and that opportunities of seeing and speaking to mamma were rarest privileges only conceded on strict conditions of quiet and prudent behaviour; and they had learnt, even the little ones, from the looks and words of those about them, that something depended on this quiet, that some danger too terrible to be put into words was hanging over the house, and that little acts of theirs might increase or lessen it. What a weight this thought hung on every one's spirits; how long and dreary it made the bright, hot, summer days, that used to seem so full of happy chances of treats and surprises, and always too short for the delicious talks about going-out-of-town, plans that had formerly to be squeezed in between the thickening business of this busiest term of all the year. There was no alleviation either to be got out of visits to grandmamma and talks with Aunt Rachel, for old Mrs. Ingram had never recovered from the attack of bronchitis that had seized her in the spring; and Rose sometimes thought that her papa was hardly less anxious each morning about the report from R—— Square, sent by Aunt Rachel, than he was to hear, before he went out, the result of the doctor's daily visit to mamma's room. The elders of the family seemed to have nothing but anxiety round them, and the gloom reflected from their faces filled the house. It was curious to see how it affected the children, bringing out their bad and good qualities in various and unexpected ways. Maggie, who had always being supposed to be the best-tempered

of the sisterhood, seemed suddenly to have taken a leaf out of Florence's book, and puzzled every one by bursting into sudden fits of tears, for which she could only give such insufficient excuses as that Lionel had trodden on her foot, or Lucy Fanshawe showed her a shell pincushion that put her in mind of the shells they had picked up at Lowestoft last summer. When questioned more particularly, she generally said that she thought it very hard that all the other girls at College should have treats, and make up plans for holiday excursions, when nothing of the kind could that year come to them; and neither nurse's petting nor the Fräulein's reasoning seemed to do her any good. A word or two about what Rose called "real things," which Rose managed once or twice to slip into their talk, did better; and the privilege accorded to them by their father, after a request from Rose, of attending the five o'clock service in the church at the end of the square, when afternoon lessons were finished in time, and Anne could be persuaded to take them, seemed to answer best of all in composing her spirits. Unluckily, the days when all the lessons were finished by ten minutes to five, and when Anne found herself at leisure to put on her bonnet and take the young ladies across the square, were few and far between. Florence was the most eager of the party to attend the services, and had always finished her lesson, and begun to worry Maggie and Lilly about getting on with theirs before the school-room clock pointed to the quarter; but the peaceful half-hour which sent Maggie and Rose home with quieted nerves and calmer tempers had not always the same happy effect on Florence. She often looked more miserable when she returned from church than when she went; and once or twice she spoke, so

sharply to the Fräulein, and showed so much ill-temper at tea-time, that Rose dreaded lest they should all be kept at home for the future, as a punishment for misuse of privileges.

The boys could neither of them be securely counted on from day to day as being in one mood or another. Sometimes the school-room party saw little of them for a week at a time, and they excused their desertion by pleading that they might as well accept invitations from friends, and go in for cricket and athletic sports, while there was nothing going on at home to tempt them to spend their play-hours there.

"Poor things!" nurse would say, when the Fräulein found fault with their irregularity; "let them be happy while they can, and enjoy themselves as long as there's no reason why they should not. I would not grudge them any bit of pleasure they can get now, if I were you."

The overhearing speeches such as this from nurse or Packer had, however, the exactly contrary effect from that intended, and was sure to be followed by a few days when the boys hung about the house at every college interval, and added to their sisters' difficulties and at the same time lessened their unhappiness) by always wanting some one to come and talk to them. Rose lost a good deal of credit with Mr. Henderson by spending several evenings, which might have been given to study, in sitting on the attic stairs with Claude, trying vehemently to persuade herself and him that there certainly had been times in their lives before when they had seen as little of mamma, and when papa had been as anxious, and nurse had gone about the house with just the same foreboding face. Oh, how happy they were, when they could establish an instance of papa's



having been more angry with one of them for awakening mamma from an afternoon sleep than he certainly would be with one of the little ones now. Rose made as much as she could of all these anecdotes, and fancied at the time that they comforted her; but she had all along a misgiving at the bottom of her heart that papa's present forbearance was born not of less anxiety, but of something in his thoughts towards them that would not let him speak sharply, however much they deserved it. Was it pity for some sorrow coming? She tried very hard to hope not.

Lionel did not find any one to talk so comfortably to him. Maggie was willing enough, but she could never think of anything comforting or sympathetically dismal to say. When she had remarked a good many times over that it was very strange that other people should be happy and not they, and that she had never known such a horrid summer before, she had come to the end of her resources. Florence, who had once been considered Lionel's natural ally, was less satisfactory still; for she never could be half-an-hour alone with him without making some allusion to Jim Packer and the stable-yard, and that always put Lionel in a passion, or drove him out of the house.

The nursery was his chief resource; where in his best moods he made himself so useful, that nurse's old preference for Master Claude was shaken, and she was heard to remark that Lionel was the most like his precious mamma after all, and from not being so overtaken up with books and studies as some she could name, had the most rational ways with him, and was the best company. Her favour, however, made her all the quicker to observe that moping about in the house with the little ones this hot weather was bad for his health and appetite, and set her upon talking away the

fect of her former inuendoes so skilfully, that Lionel's fears and good feelings vanished together, and he again persuaded himself and Claude to believe that the gloom and fuss at home had no reasonable cause, and that they were best out of the way. Claude was by no means unwilling to think anxious faces best out of sight, but there was this difference between his absences and Lionel's. When he was long away from home, Rose could picture him as certainly taking refuge with the Papillons, and getting more comfort out of long talks with Walter and Mary than she could give him; whereas no one seemed to have the least idea where or with whom Lionel spent his spare time. Claude believed that he "humbugged about with a lot of little fellows low down in the school, whom he ought to be above speaking to," but though Florence was persistent in asking questions, this was all the light the sisters ever got about his proceedings. For them it was indeed a dreary time.

As Rose turned away from the bookcase on which she had laid the Bibles that July morning, Maggie's merry bird, excited by a burst of song from its neighbour, Mrs. Fanshawe's bird, whose cage Lucy was just then hanging out in the sunshine of the drawing-room balcony, set up a loud joyous chant in answer, and Maggie, at a warning look from the Fräulein, seized a black handkerchief and made night in its cage.

Tears of sympathy sprang into Rose's eyes. "Poor little bird, must it be sad to? must it too be robbed of its summer and sunshine?" She tried hard to gulp down the lump that rose in her throat, and took her place with the others at the table, where the Fräulein was waiting to say grace. There was a letter waiting for her on her plate, directed in a round, careful hand, unlike that of any of her usual correspondents. It was

a welcome interruption to her sad thoughts, and as soon as they were all seated, and the Fräulein gave leave, she read as follows :—

“DEAR MISS,—It is a long time since Easter, when you give me my purple frock and all them things, and we talked so happy on the stairs, and please I would be glad to know how your mother is, which you'll be glad to hear of mine that she is better and hardly ever has a pain in her side now. Teddy fell down stairs yesterday was a week, and nearly cut a piece off the end of his nose; but we took him to the hospital and the doctor sewed it up very careful, and mother hope it won't do no hurt to his good looks. Dear Miss, this is not what I want to write to you about. I don't know how to tell you all there is in my mind; but I mean to go on writing till I get it said, because I seem to know, dear Miss, that you are my friend and that you have never thought bad of me all this long time while other people have. I often think of what you said that evening about coming to see my young lady, and every morning I hope you will call that day, and when there comes a ring at the bell I stand listening and looking for the door to be opened, till cook and parlour-maid say sometimes they think I'm little better than a gaby, and my young lady herself is really angry with me. I want you to come so very much, dear Miss, that you may say a good word for me, for things is very unpleasant here for me now, and I think they get worse every day. Sometimes, please Miss, it's tapes and threads and glass-headed pins and that, and sometimes it's fruit out of the tart and such like things, brings me into such sad trouble, and makes me feel as if I could hardly bear my life, for, please Miss, they go a great deal quicker than they ought, specially strawberries, and purple-headed pins, and then cook and parlour-maid pass remarks between them, saying as how it's impossible to tell the way things will go, when charity girls is let come into a house. Once I should have held up my head and never heeded such words, trusting to mother's good character and to my always having been spoke well of at school; but now, please Miss, the story of the gold thimble have got known in this house, and cook she says, that if such a thing as that could be found in my pocket, the less I say about my school or about the ladies being fond of me the better, for that I can't expect any one to believe me or trust me ever again. And, oh Miss, that's true, and it is that, Miss, that is breaking my heart; for mother don't trust me no longer as she used to do, and she did not stand up for me last night when cook spoke to her about all the fruit having been took out of the raspberry and currant tart on Sunday afternoon when she was out, and Mary Anne and me left to put away the dinner things and do up the kitchen. I thought mother would have said vehement that

e was sure it was not me, for that I had always been an honest  
 ild since first I was sent to the shop to buy things. Instead of  
 at she looked at me full, before cook and all, and turned pa'e  
 e, and put her apron up to her eyes, and I knew she was think-  
 ; of the gold thimble, and I thought I should have dropped,  
 ase Miss, I was that miserable and ashamed for my own mother,  
 at I love so dear, to look at me before others when I was accused  
 picking and stealing and not find a word to say. Mother is a  
 man as can't say what she don't think, and now I know  
 ut there gold thimble will always lie between her and me, and be  
 her thoughts when folks speak against me as long as I live,  
 less something can be found out about how it got into my pocket.  
 , please Miss, won't you help me? Father is different, but the  
 y he takes it don't make me any happier, because I'm afraid it  
 lspread the talk. One of Mrs. Chapman's children took some  
 rries off a stall, and was brought home by a policeman, and  
 s. Chapman took something amiss that mother said to her about  
 pping her children more at home, and told mother she had no call  
 give herself airs, as it was well known what her daughter had  
 e with respect to something worth a good deal more than a  
 idful of rotten cherries, and father overheard and went into the  
 m and spoke rough, and there was a quarrel between him and  
 apman. Reuben Johnstone, too, he interfered with Bill Chapman  
 calling after me as I went up stairs, so that now all the  
 apmans are set against us and act very disrespectful to mother,  
 l it grieves her, for she says she has always been used to live  
 ceably with her neighbours and make no talk. Dear Miss, I  
 ve wrote all this bit by bit when I could get time, and it has  
 ok me two weeks since I began, but I must finish it and send it  
 to-day, for, Oh Miss, something worse than all has happened, and  
 lo want you so to come. My young lady have lost a brooch that  
 e uses to fasten the velvet round her neck with. Please it had a  
 on it made all of bright stones, and I have often looked at it,  
 d said downstairs how pretty and how like a real fly it was, and  
 at I should like to show it to father. So now they all say it's I  
 ust have took it, as I took the gold thimble, and the elder  
 vants, cook and parlour-maid, is very angry, and they say they  
 on't rest till they've got me out of the house. Cook says she'll  
 nd for a policeman to search my things and lock me up if I don't  
 uffess directly and clear their characters. Oh dear Miss, can't you  
 me soon and speak up for me? Sometimes I hope you may have  
 and out something about that night that would clear me and lift  
 e out of all this trouble, for I do think if I am to be made out to  
 a thief again it will go nigh to kill father and mother.

"Your sorrowing true friend,

"ROSE MARSHALL."

Rose Ingram sprang up from her seat as soon as she had finished reading, and said eagerly in German, "I must see papa before he goes out; please Fräulein, may I wait for him as he comes from mamma's room the last time, just to get one word?"

"Sit down and finish your breakfast first, my dear, I must think about it," answered the Fräulein. "Your father does not like your standing about to question him as he leaves your mother's room; it distresses him."

"But this is not a question that can distress him," pleaded Rose.

"Well, I will think about it; finish your breakfast first, at all events."

Rose's breakfast was soon eaten; still the Fräulein hesitated, and Rose listened anxiously to the little noises in the house that told how the business of the day was going on outside the schoolroom. She heard the front door shut after Claude and Lionel on their way to school. Then the doctor's carriage stopped before the house; he was paying an early visit this morning, and papa was waiting for him.

The Professor went upstairs with the doctor, stayed a long time in mamma's room, and accompanying him downstairs, took him into the study.

By this time morning lessons had begun, and the Fräulein, by way of distracting Rose's thoughts, had started a repetition of German verbs, and there seemed no hope.

Rose paused in the middle of a tense when she again heard a man's footstep mounting the staircase. "Oh, papa is coming up again. Fräulein, mayn't I go to the door just for five minutes?"

Permission was given, but before Rose reached the school-room door there was a knock, and Packer ap-

heard with a message that Miss Rose was to go to the study to speak to her father before he went out.

"Why, how lucky," exclaimed Rose, joyfully; but raising her eyes for sympathy to the Fräulein's face, she saw an expression in it that checked her spirits, and made her rather doubtful whether after all she should trouble her father to read Rose Marshall's letter. She thrust it into her pocket for the chance, and ran downstairs.

The Professor was seated before his desk with several notes already written, and a newspaper spread out before him. Rose saw in an instant that he looked very pale and anxious, and yet not quite so sad as usual; there was a look of excitement on his face that brightened it a little.

"Sit down there, my dear," he said, pointing to a seat; "I have a good deal to say to you."

Rose sat down and her father finished a note rapidly, and then remained silent for a few minutes with his hands pressed over his eyes, as he often sat when he was thinking very deeply. Then he turned to her: "Rose," he began, "of all the children in the house, I believe you are most to be trusted. I believe you have most self-command, and are most in the habit of considering others above yourself. I don't say this to flatter you, my dear, but to account to myself for the trust I am about to put in you, and for my speaking to you to-day as I should naturally speak to a much older person."

He paused as if he expected an answer, and Rose said in a trembling voice, "I will try to do just as you bid me."

"That is just what I want," the Professor said, in a tone of relief. "You need not think for yourself, you will only have to remember and act on my instructions.

My dear, you know how anxious we have been, now this long time, about your mother's health."

"Yes, we all know."

"There is great cause for anxiety; but, thank God, we are not called upon yet to give up hope. The doctors are now agreed as to the cause of her sufferings, and there is a remedy, but it is one which involves great pain and risk. Your mother has hitherto been extremely unwilling to submit to this remedy unless we could have the advice and assistance of an old friend of hers, a medical man who attended her in a severe illness some years ago. This gentleman has been travelling abroad for some months, out of the reach of letters and telegrams, and your poor mother has pleaded to have the crisis put off for the possibility of his return in time. Our terrible anxiety has been lest her strength should not hold out, or the disease should have made too much progress for his skill to avail her anything when he came. This morning, however, I have seen his name in a list of the passengers on board a ship that is telegraphed as likely to arrive at Southampton to-day. I am going myself to meet him on his landing, and bring him here if possible to-night. Your mother has not heard the news, and I dare not tell it her for fear of disappointment; but she has told the doctors this morning that she has made up her mind to submit to the operation to-morrow, and begged them to make all arrangements. I am very unwilling to be away for so many hours to-day, as I fear it will be a trying time, and I doubt whether I could go if your mother did not appear to rely greatly on you, Rose, and she has taken a strong wish that you should be with her during the remaining hours of this day, when almost everything depends on her mind being kept calm and cheerful.

he has determined on sending the little ones away to-day with nurse to grandmamma's, where she will best be able to think of their remaining through the anxious days before us; and you elder ones may have to be sent out of the house, but I will decide on that when I return this evening. Our chief care must now be to keep mamma quiet and tolerably happy to-day. Nurse will be away, you see, and though your mother is very grateful to the Fräulein for all the kindness she has shown her during her illness, yet——"

"Yes, I know, papa; it tires her head when she is in pain to have to understand German. I have heard her say so."

"And Mrs. Fanshawe is easily upset by the sight of suffering; so there is no one your mother would like to have with her through this day but you, Rose. Can you bear it, my child? She will talk of to-morrow correspondingly, perhaps, and you must control yourself. I have told you all, lest any sudden disclosure coming to you through what she might say should upset you. Do you think you can bear up through such a day as this? Do you think I may venture to leave your mother to your care?"

Rose did not venture on any protestations; she only looked into her father's face, and said steadily, "How kind of dear mamma to think of having me! When shall you be back, papa?"

"That depends upon the hour at which the vessel arrives. I may possibly get back at my usual time. I shall try very hard for that, you may be sure; or I may be detained till very late. If my return is long delayed, you will have to tell your mother quietly where I have gone, and why. You must not let her wonder or grow anxious about me; and if she asks to



see Maggie and Lilly and the boys before their bedtime, and I am not in, you must talk to them and persuade them to behave rationally and avoid all excitement. Do you think you can? Rose, I believe you know where to go for strength and help in sore need like this. It is that that gives me confidence in you."

"Yes, papa," Rose said softly.

The words were poor for the great throb of feeling that went with them, but there was a look in the child's eyes, an upward look of accustomed trust that carried confidence and strength to the father's heart.

He took her in his arms and kissed her. "Go then, my dear, to your mother's room, for I promised to send you at once. Nurse is to bring the little ones to say good-bye when they are dressed, and after that I hope you will have a quiet time. Try to be just natural, and tell her of your school-room doings, as you would have done a year ago. I have written a note of explanation to the Fräulein, which you can take to her now; the other children need only know that, since nurse is away to-day, mamma wishes you to sit with her till I return home."

"Papa, you are more hopeful than you were last night, are you not?" whispered Rose, as, before turning to run up-stairs, she took a last kiss in the hall.

"If I bring back Dr. Spencer it will be a great thing for us," Professor Ingram answered, cheerfully. "But I dare not hope too much; Spencer is not an uncommon name, and it is possible there may be some mistake even in the telegram. In a few hours we shall know. For your sake as well as my own, my little one, I wish these hours were over."

Rose, as she gave the note to the Fräulein, and

made a judicious selection of work, and a book (such as mamma might like to look at), was not quite sure that she echoed the wish. Her age and disposition disposed her at once to spring up towards any fresh hope, such as she had read on her father's face, and she tried to shut out the distressing thoughts about to-morrow which the conversation had suggested by resolutely keeping before her mind the thing she had to do just now. To be mamma's companion and comforter for the greater part of one day. It looked almost like a crown of joy that had come to her, though there might be a sharp thorn or two to pierce her as she wore it.

Maggie and Lilly were loud in their expressions of envy. Florence looked wistful, and the Fräulein called her back from the door to kiss her on the forehead, pausing in her knitting for the purpose, actually—the Fräulein, who was not very apt to bestow kisses in season hours.

Mamma's room, when Rose reached it, looked much as it had done on that winter's morning six months ago, when Rose had gone there to receive instructions about buying Lilly's birth-day presents. The only difference being that its pleasant warmth and light was due to the modified sunshine stealing through the closed jealousies, and that the fire-place was filled with great pots of green ferns and scarlet geraniums sent from Lady Dunallan's greenhouse yesterday. Nurse was arranging bottles and cups on a little table by the window, with Willie, always inquisitive, looking on, and the two little ones had been lifted on the bed to be near mamma. There was no pleasant play at having breakfast going on though to-day. The tray with mamma's untasted breakfast had been moved out of the way, and mamma lay back on her pillows, not

talking to the children, only looking at them, and then twisting one of Trotty's thick curls round her finger, and stroking it softly with her other hand.

"I think they had better go now, nurse," she said softly, after a little while. "Lift them each one near me to kiss me once and then take them away."

Rose saw it was not a minute too soon, for Trotty, guessing somehow that something solemn was going on, had put up his under lip and was preparing for a howl.

"They will be very happy at grandmamma's," mamma said, looking wistfully after them as nurse led them away.

"Yes, very happy," Rose answered cheerfully; "they will have David, the old rocking-horse, to play with in the spare room. You know we all of us think that there is no fun in the world so good as riding old David."

"Poor little darlings," mamma answered in a very shaky voice. "Poor little darlings. I'm glad they have that pleasure. I'm glad you reminded me of old David, Rose. Yes, it's quite enough to make them happy."

A great lump came in Rose's throat, and she longed to throw herself at mamma's side and tell her, that it was only the little ones who could forget so soon; that nothing, nothing, nothing, could ever make her or the elder ones happy if that dreadful thing happened; but she saw her mamma was making up her mind to. For a moment the longing was almost overpowering, and then she mastered it, knowing it would be a selfish indulgence of feeling and a betrayal of the trust placed in her.

Fortunately nurse came back in a few minutes

a dose of medicine that was due, and make some arrangements in the room.

A new nurse was to come with the doctors when they paid their mid-day visit, but mamma seemed to shrink from seeing her, and begged she might not come. Rose was sent for.

Rose could get all she wanted for the next few days. Nurse looked a little doubtful, and went off at last with a parting injunction to Rose not to "talk her mamma's head off," and when the door closed behind her Rose felt that her responsibility began.

There was very little to be done at first. Mamma was quite still after her medicine, as nurse had advised her to do, trying to sleep—not sleeping, however, for Rose who indulged herself with a little peep behind the curtains now and then, saw that her lips moved silently though her eyes were closed.

During this quiet interval Rose had time to remember James's letter, which had quite escaped her thoughts from the moment she had entered her father's room. She did not take it out of her pocket to read at first for fear the rustling of the paper should disturb mamma, but she thought it all over word by word, and her first excitement and indignation came back to her. Had she been very selfish to forget her little friend's extremity all this while? Was it right to let her father go away without asking his advice and advice upon so difficult a question. There was no one else in the house who could help her, and the more she thought the more sure she felt that her father must not be troubled about anything for the day or two. What then could she do? Oh, why had she not thought of sending Rose Marshall's letter to Aunt Rachel. Aunt Rachel, though she

was kept much at home by her close attendance grandmamma, might be able to take some steps. The next best thing would be to write a note inclosing R Marshall's letter and send it by post.

Rose felt relieved as the thought grew, and she began to search her pockets for a pencil and scrap of paper to prepare a note that she might entrust to Maggie at dinner-time, to be sent to the post. Of course, neither pencil nor paper was forthcoming when so much need and Rose, peeping through the curtains and perceiving that her mother had at last really fallen into a deep sleep, decided that she must not get up and look for the doctor. She must bear the waiting and doing nothing as well as she could, for she had been sent there to guard her mother's quiet and must not sacrifice that to any other business.

Mamma slept till the bell rang for the school-room dinner, and as very soon after the doctor came for his second visit, bringing the new nurse with him, Rose was dismissed for a little while.

"But come back soon, dear," Mrs. Ingram said, taking her little daughter's hand for a minute as she stood by the bed, and looking towards the door as it opened to admit the new nurse, with an expression of anxiety that went to Rose's heart. "To-morrow I shall reconcile myself to the new faces, and like this skittish nurse who is going to have so much trouble with me, but I don't want it to begin to-day. I want only for you to know and love about me for the next few hours. I want you, dear, to look at and talk to. Get your dinner quite comfortably, dear Rose, but come back the instant you have done."

"The very instant, dear mamma," Rose said, stooping to kiss her.

The school-room party were eager in questioning Rose during dinner about how she had spent her morning.

"Why, after all," said Maggie, when Rose had come to the end of her account of herself—"after all, it's nothing to have done. I could have done *that* just as well as you, Rose. I wish mamma would send for me this afternoon."

"I wish we could all be with her," answered Rose, generously, observing how dark and miserable Florence looked as the talk went on.

"Not me," cried Florence, "don't let mamma send for me. I could not sit still and see her look pale and move her lips as you say she has been doing. I could not bear it."

"But you would like to help her, would not you?" said Rose.

"Not that way—I could not bear it. You can't be as sorry for mamma as I am, Rose, or you could not bear it."

"I don't know," said Rose. "But you would like to do something, would you not, Flory?"

They had risen from the table by this time, and Rose drew Florence after her towards the door.

"Dear Flory, I want you to do something for me," she said, in a low voice. "I want you to write a note to Aunt Rachel, and to send this letter that I got this morning with it to her. Read the letter yourself, Flory, and you'll know what to say. You write so much better than Maggie, that I'd rather trust you to make Aunt Rachel understand what we want her to do. Get Maggie and Lilly to finish lessons before five to-day, and post your letter on the way to church. You won't forget, I know, when you have read Rose Marshall's letter. I trust it all to you."

The new nurse had got Mrs. Ingram up while the school-room dinner was going on, and Rose found her on the sofa near the window, in her blue dressing-gown and morning cap, and with the bright pink spot on each cheek that Rose used to admire so much, but which she had learned to distrust lately as a sign of pain.

"Ready for a great deal of nice talk, my darling," Mrs. Ingram said, stretching out both hands to Rose as she came near. "I have been very good for a long time, and done as papa and nurse bid me, and never asked questions about any of you, but to-day I am going to give myself a holiday between times. I want to know a great many little things that you can tell me."

"Nurse said I must not talk your head off, you know, dear mamma," Rose ventured, as she settled herself on the floor by the sofa, and leaned her head in its old place, against the roll of the sofa, close to mamma's face.

"My love, I am judging for myself what is best for me just to-day, and I think I am not mistaken," mamma said, with a gentle sort of dignity which satisfied Rose that she need no longer attempt to question, but must just do as her mother pleased, trusting that while doing this, and telling the truth on all points about which she was questioned, she should be guided *how* to speak. It was fortunate to-day that now, for some months at least, she had been cultivating the habit of making the best, and seeing the best, in and of everything and everybody; so that while giving true answers to close questions, she could leave a bright, comfortable impression about nearly every matter touched upon.

"Did they like their lessons with the Fäulein any better now?"

"Oh, yes; they had all learned to like the Fräulein thoroughly now, and speaking German was not tiresome at all; one hardly knew, in fact, whether one was speaking German or English; and now they understood her easily, they had found out how kind she could be. Why, last Thursday, when Lilly could not do her sums, instead of scolding, she took her on her knee, and told her a delicious story about a charcoal burner in the Black Forest."

"The Fräulein told a story in lesson hours! She does not press you too hard with work then? She notices when any one of you is tired?"

"Yes, indeed, mamma," answered Rose, eagerly. "Do you know, I have seen her lately touch Florence's cheek with the back of her hand just as you used to do; and when it is too hot, she takes the lesson away she is growing fussy over, and gives her something easy to do."

"God bless her for such care," said the poor mother, softly. "My dear, you make me very happy by telling me such good news, better than I had hoped to hear."

It was indeed balm to Mrs. Ingram's foreboding heart; and if Rose had not been thinking more of others than of herself, and had not had open eyes for kindnesses instead of for affronts, she might not have been able to give it. In truth, the Fräulein had somewhat resented Professor Ingram's adoption of Rose as his special pupil, and had lately shown a little coldness and a little captiousness towards Rose that observation and resentment might have magnified into such grievances as would have given a very different colour to this conversation. Other pleasant topics followed, to which Rose's habitual gratitude and good-will made her quite naturally lead the way—Mrs. Fanshawe's extra-



ordinary kindness to them all—Clade's nice ways with papa—the great favour into which nurse had lately taken Lionel—the trick Mr. Henderson had fallen into of giving such interesting lectures, that it was as good as reading a story-book to listen to them. And when at last even good news of the school-room party seemed to grow too exciting, Rose, by aid of the work she had brought with her, managed to turn the conversation to the Marshalls, and gave all the pleasant intelligence she could of them, without touching on the history of the gold thimble. The afternoon wore quickly away, and the dangerous time approached when the Professor would naturally have come back from college. Rose heard Claude and Lionel come in, and go out again, she hoped her mother did not notice the sounds, but saw that under the circumstances attempts at conversation were of no further use. She had recourse to her book for the chance of reading her mother to sleep, and stumbled on a story that arrested Mrs. Ingram's attention, and interested her perhaps a little too much, though Rose was not aware at first of the amount of feeling the words she read called up. It was the story of the martyrdom of St. Felicitas and her seven sons, to which Mrs. Ingram listened so intently as for a while to make her forget how time was passing on that day. Rose, who was fond of the story, and knew it almost by heart, read well; and, on looking up at the end, was surprised at the rapt expression in her mother's eyes, turned not on her, but upwards. There was a minute or two of silence, and then Mrs. Ingram turned to Rose with a beautiful smile on her face.

"It was not human strength," she said. "A mother could not have borne it by herself—seven sons—to stand

, and see them all suffer and die. *How* she must have been helped."

"Mamma," said Rose, "it was so very glorious; she must have been so very proud of her sons. I have always thought I could have——"

"No, my dear; no. Happily, you don't yet know what it is—very terrible pain; and to see one's own child die—it—no thought of glory—no pride in her children would have helped her; nothing but our Lord's own presence quite close to her. She must have had *that*."

"Mamma, perhaps I ought not to have read you such a sad story?"

"No, it has done me good. It is well to be reminded of such things. If one mother, brave and noble, could be helped to bear the agony of seeing her children martyred, another mother, even as weak and cowardly as I am, may hope to be helped through a trial of suffering she is meeting for her children's sake, the chance of being restored to usefulness for them."

Rose took up her mother's thin, hot hand, and gently laid her cheek against it. She had always been so fond of hearing of brave deeds, and of people who could endure; and here was her own gentle mother showing a courage born of love, that Rose thought made her equal to the heroines she dreamed about. The mother at whose fearfulness she had sometimes smiled with a little contempt, fancying herself the stronger of the two. How she would love and reverence this mother henceforth, whatever happened; and if, through the blessing of God, the suffering she was about to meet for their sakes had its reward, and she was spared to them, how she would serve her all the rest of her life!

"My dear, is not that the bell for the school-room tea?" Mrs. Ingram asked, after a little space of quiet. "It must be half-past six o'clock; an hour later than your father generally comes home. How have I let the time slip away without noticing it? I wish he would come, Rose, dear. Something must be keeping him, and he would not let a little thing keep him away from me to-day."

"Not a little thing, mamma?" said Rose, on whom the crisis of her task had now come. "But you know, mamma, perhaps it might be a pleasant thing—something you might be glad of—that kept him a little longer away."

Mrs. Ingram started nearly upright on the sofa, and then fell back with a little cry of pain. "Rose, you know something; tell me," she said, faintly; and Rose, trembling very much, but controlling herself so as to speak quietly, explained the errand on which her father had gone, and told how anxious he had seemed that her mother should have as short a time of suspense to bear as possible.

Mrs. Ingram bore the news very quietly.

"You have managed me very well, you two," she said, smiling. "Your father put it into my head to ask for your company to-day, and the experiment has turned out well. You have made the afternoon pass quickly, and you have given me something to think of that helps me to bear suspense. Yes, darling, I am not going to excite myself by thinking over chances for and against Dr. Spencer's coming back with your father. I have given it all up; and it will make less difference to me now than it would have done a few days ago. I have been enabled to place my life in higher hands, and I think I can keep quiet, and await the result in peace."

I should like to be quite alone for a little while, dear Rose; go and get your tea in the school-room; you look tired and pale with the effort of telling this to me. After tea, I want to see the others for a few minutes at a time, one by one. I told your father I must see all of you alone (in turn) to-night, and I think now I had better get these interviews over before he comes back. It will save him some anxiety. Yes, dear Rose, half-an-hour alone will help me to say good-night, and a few words of love to the others, without distressing them, as I have I fear distressed you, my brave little daughter, my comfort through a weary day."

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## CHAPTER XX.

### TEDDY TO THE RESCUE.

MAGGIE met Rose at the school-room door: "Oh, do you know, there is such a fuss going on, you never heard anything like it before—but stay, shut the door; we are to be very careful, for the Fräulein says it would just kill mamma if the least breath of what has happened got to her room. The Fräulein is in a state of mind."

"What is it?—no one hurt, I hope—nothing really wrong?" cried Rose, dismayed at the thought of the serious consequences a very small mishap might occasion on this particular evening.

"It is all through Florence's obstinacy. She has gone and lost herself—so stupid of her! She would go to church this evening without Anne or me. I told her she ought not to go out as Anne was busy, but she would, and she has actually never come back again,

though it's long past six and the other people have left the church ages ago. I watched them out of church, and when Florence did not come home I told the Fräulein, and she sent Anne to Mrs. Fanshawe's, and now she's gone herself to search the square and the main road. Is not it odd?"

"It's dreadful," cried poor Rose. "Oh, how I wish I had never asked her to write and post that letter!"

"What letter?"

"A letter to Aunt Rachel. Oh, can she have gone to Russell Square to take it herself? How soon I wonder can we get her back? Maggie, mamma wants to see us all after tea, and she is very ill to-night; and I really do think if there is a fuss, and if we have to tell her that Florence is not in the house, and that we don't know exactly where she is, it will kill her. How could Florence do it?—how could she?"

"Well, I believe her obstinacy about going out alone had something to do with a letter. She was reading one over and over all lesson-time, and when I asked her to show it me, she scrunched it up in her pocket and turned red and pale as if she were going to have a tooth pulled out."

"Where are Claude and Lionel?"

"Claude came in at six o'clock, just as Anne got back from Mrs. Fanshawe's with the news that Florence was not at her house, and had not been at church at all, for Lucy was there and had not seen her, so the Fräulein begged him to run round to the flower-shop in Church Street, for the chance of Flo's having gone there to buy mamma a nosegay. It is not a bit likely, but it was the only thing we could think of. Rose, do you believe Florence has been run over or anything?—you look so pale! What do you think?"

"I think she has gone to Russell Square to see Aunt Rachel and show her a letter from Rose Marshall about the gold thimble, which came this morning, and which I gave to Florence to send to Aunt Rachel by post. I am not at all uneasy about Florence, but I dread mamma's hearing that she has gone out alone, when she asks for her to bid her good-night. As it is so late, perhaps Aunt Rachel may keep her till to-morrow morning, and then Florence may not see mamma again for a long, long time."

"What do you mean?"

"Maggie, I believe we are all going to be sent away from home, that the house may be kept very quiet while mamma tries some new remedy under a new doctor who is coming to-night. Won't it be sad for Florence if she has to leave the house without bidding mamma good-bye? It was kind of her to be so anxious to help Rose Marshall, but I do wonder at her going out without anybody's leave, or telling anybody where she was going. Can she know more about the theft of the gold thimble than we do?"

Maggie did not think this likely, and while the girls were still recalling the events of the Charade evening to convince themselves that Florence's opportunities for observation had been fewer than other people's, Claude returned to report a fruitless visit to the flower-shop, and two minutes afterwards the Fräulein appeared, looking extremely breathless and flurried, and evidently so seriously anxious, that Claude and Maggie, who had at first been inclined to look upon Flo's escapade as something of a joke, caught the infection of her fear. Rose's conjecture that Florence had gone to Russell Square was listened to with great eagerness by the Fräulein. Claude seized his cap to rush off there and

make sure, but Rose stopped him. "The most important thing of all," she explained, "was to guard against mamma's asking for Florence while she was still missing, or at all events till papa was at hand to decide what should be done, and to comfort her if she were uneasy. To prevent this they must occupy her attention, as long as possible, with visits from the other children. Lilly and Maggie could not spin out their good-nights to cover more than half-an-hour, and Lionel might not be back when he was wanted."

"Won't, certainly," struck in Claude. "I could not get hold of him after school; he was off somewhere before I was free, and as I know he has taken it into his absurd head that papa won't be back to-night at all, he is sure to be precious late in coming in. Oh, what a shame it seems that two of us should be missing when mamma wants us. Lionel deserves to have his feet cut off, and Florence too—won't I give it them when they do come in!"

"There'll be no need," said Rose sadly; "if they miss seeing mamma, it will be worse for them than anything you can do to them. They'll be miserable enough without anybody's needing to say anything."

It was settled at last that the Fräulein herself should go to Russell Square, and that Packer and Anne should be sent out in different directions in the neighbourhood, for the chance of falling in with Florence, who might have lost her way and be straying about a few streets off, too shy and sulky to ask her way, or too much frightened to understand directions that might be forced on her by benevolent passers-by, a line of conduct which anyone who knew Florence could quite credit her with.

By the time the Fräulein had taken a cup of tea,

and started for Russell Square, it was necessary for Maggie to go to mamma's room, and Claude and Rose sent her in with much trepidation, and many injunctions to refrain from hints and inuendoes of any kind.

Fortunately Maggie's pretty pink and white face seldom showed any signs of emotion, and in a negative way she might always be trusted to do as she was bid.

Lilly was more talkable and less reliable, and Claude and Rose decided that it would be best for her to go into the room with Claude, and stay just as long as he stayed. It would shorten the safe time, but that seemed a less risk than letting her go alone.

A very quiet time in the house followed Maggie's departure from the school-room. It seemed to Rose like a lull before a storm. She went and stood at the school-room window, and looked up and down the square. Oh for the sight of some one she knew approaching. Papa, or Aunt Rachel, or Florence, or Lionel! How could Florence have done this foolish thing! How could she so far have forgotten mamma! Rose's heart ached for Florence, almost as much as for her mother. If it should be a last chance of seeing her mother—if her last act towards her mother should be to grieve and trouble her, how would she bear all the long life there might be for her afterwards? Would there be any possibility of comforting her if she brought such a trouble on herself through wilful disobedience or by the result of some secret misdoing? There must surely be an unknown cause for her present strange conduct. Could she have stolen the gold thimble herself, and be now gone to confess her fault to Aunt Rachel? Rose did not like to admit such a thought, yet nothing short



of it seemed sufficient to account for her risking a disturbance while mamma was so ill.

Maggie came back only too soon. She had been crying a little ; but not more, she declared, than any one would have cried to whom mamma had given such a long kiss, and such a sorrowful, lingering, farewell look. It had nothing to do with Florence, and she had remembered to ask leave for Claude and Lilly to follow her.

Maggie joined Rose in her watch at the window. It must be eight o'clock now, for the church bell began to ring for the eight o'clock service, and one or two people were seen hurrying across the square. The dark door-way swallowed them up, and then everything was so quiet (for this was always a still time in the square) that a faint sound of singing by-and-by reached Rose's ears. It made her think of a day last year when Teddy Marshall had been lost, and when her namesake had gone through the same time of waiting suspense as she was bearing now. The thought comforted her, for she remembered how Rose Marshall had been comforted ; and covering her eyes for a minute, she tried to stay her anxious heart on Him without whom no sparrow falls to the ground, no smallest event of His children's lives comes to pass. Her mother was resting on Him to be with her in all she had to suffer, and though wrong-doing might bring its consequences and punishment, He would not leave her to bear a pang alone. Rose was beginning to understand that with Him all pangs could be borne.

"A cab is driving up to the door," exclaimed Maggie, "and papa is in it with another gentleman. I wonder who'll open the door for them, and what papa will say to everybodys being out of the house at this time of

vening when mamma is ill. How are we to tell him about Florence and Lionel? He will be so angry."

"Oh, never mind," cried Rose joyfully; "so long as he is here to help us and tell us what to do, nothing seems to signify. I'll run down and open the door and tell him; I shall be so glad to see him, I shall not be afraid."

It *was* a little formidable, however. The Professor took a hasty alarm at the sight of Rose at the door, and from the general air of something wrong in the house, and was so much disturbed she could hardly satisfy him on the main point, that her mother was not worse since morning. This shock disposed him to take the news of Florence's and of Lionel's absence from home, when it had to be explained to him, more seriously than he might otherwise have done.

"It is quite unpardonable," he said, "that these children should bring unnecessary trouble into the house at such a time as this, quite unpardonable." They would be punished enough most likely for their disobedience, but he did not know how he could forgive them; and as he said this there was a look of stern anger on his face that made Rose tremble for the two who had brought it there. It hardly gave her any comfort, when he turned back on the stairs as he was counting them to take Dr. Spencer to her mother's room, and putting his hand on her head said,—

"You are not to blame, Rose, I am sure. This ought not to have happened, but I feel sure that you and Claude have done your best."

Claude and Lilly came from their mother's room a few minutes after Mr. Ingram and Dr. Spencer entered. They reported that mamma had asked to see Florence and Lionel, but when papa had told her

decidedly she must not have any more visitors to her room that night she had asked no further questions.

She looked very much disappointed, however, and whispered to Lilly to give her love to them both, and tell them she was sorry they had not come to her earlier in the evening.

"What will they say when they hear that?" cried Rose. "How sorry I am for them. I almost dread their coming now that it is too late to do any good."

Yet when another hour had passed, and the evening light faded into darkness, all other thoughts gave place to increasing anxiety. What could have become of them both? Claude was summoned to the study to speak to his father when the Professor left Mrs. Ingram's room, and after a somewhat long interview he came back a good deal disturbed and crestfallen. He had been closely cross-questioned, and had been obliged to give some details of Lionel's late conduct out of school, which his father blamed him for having concealed so long.

"Not that I mind *that* so much," said Claude to Rose, "because by-and-by, when I tell papa I held my tongue only because I could not vex him just now when everything is so miserable, I know he'll forgive me; but he blames himself still more than he blames me, and says he has been neglecting us and not meeting his trial in the right way, and he looks so unhappy I just can't bear to see it, and all because Florence is such a baby and Lionel could not be satisfied with anything short of running after that fool of a Jim Packer. Well, it will all come out now, for Packer is sent for, and he will have to rout out the two of them wherever they are. His reign in the house is over, you may be sure of that. It seems a pity, does it not? for mamma likes

him. He lived with her father when she was little, you know, and I don't suppose he will ever be as happy any where else as he has been here. Lionel will be surprised when he finds what a precious piece of work has come of his pig-headedness."

"Yes," said Rose, softly, "that is the dreadful part of it; things are so twisted together, that one little bit of wrong seems to pull such a great deal after it one never knows when it will stop. Ah, and I have observed that it is the same the other way, and that ever such a little beginning of trying to do right draws helps and rewards after it that are ever so much more than one expects, or than one ever could deserve. It is very curious."

"And frightening too. Don't you think so?" observed Claude, in a more confidential tone than he usually allowed himself to fall into when Rose tried to draw him into one of her talks about real things.

"Well, I think it would be frightening if it were not for something else. I will whisper it, Claude, for I feel it almost too solemn to say out loud. 'Even there also shall Thy Hand lead me and Thy Right Hand shall hold me.' I used to be afraid of that Psalm, do you know, Claude, once, as if it were dreadful to be always looked at wherever one was; but now I think it is perhaps the most comfortable of anything in the Bible. It is as if one were told one might walk all one's life feeling as one did when one was a little child and had hold of mamma's hand; so very safe."

"Only if one does not feel it," said Claude, gruffly.

"After next year, Claude, you and I shall have more helps. Mamma was talking about that this very afternoon, and she said she thought by the spring I should be old enough to be prepared with you for the con-

firmation in the church here. I am glad we shall be together."

Rose stole her hand into her brother's as she finished her sentence, and as it was quite dark and they were alone, he did not pull his away, but sat silent by her side for a few minutes of grave thought—silent minutes, that seemed to Rose to be drawing their hearts closer together than hours of ordinary talk.

Peace, however, could not last long on that evening. The next thing that happened was the return of the Fräulein from Russell Square with the tidings that nothing had been seen or heard there of Florence. The Professor, who up to this time had confidently accepted Rose's explanation of her sister's disappearance, and who had therefore been more disturbed at Lionel's misconduct than at Florence's absence from home, was now thoroughly alarmed, and after a consultation with Dr. Spencer, set forth to the nearest police-station to give notice of the child's being lost, and engage the services of the police in searching for her through London.

By this time Maggie and Lilly were both crying with fright at the notion of Florence possibly having to pass the night alone in the dark streets; and as there was no nurse up-stairs to comfort or scold them, the Fräulein had not the heart to send them to bed, but let them nestle up on each side of Rose on the old school-room sofa, while she sat near putting in a word of comfort now and then, and encouraging Claude to talk out all the conjectures about the runaways that were in his mind. A break came with the news, brought breathlessly into the school-room by Anne and the parlour-maid simultaneously, that Lionel had been seen creeping down the area-steps, and that he was now

trying to get in at the back-door, which cook, with some undefined idea of being on the alert while trouble was about, had locked and bolted an hour earlier than usual that night. Claude went down to let him in, and sent him to his room at once, as his father had desired he would do if Lionel returned while he was absent, saying that his father had left word he was too much disturbed to see him that night, and must keep all he had to say till another morning. A hard punishment the girls felt it would be to be sent off into solitude with the bare intelligence that all his misdeeds had been brought to light, without a moment to talk out his dismay and fright with anyone; but all agreed that it was no more than he deserved. When Claude came back to the school-room everybody looked at him anxiously, though no questions were asked.

“Hampton races!” said Claude, shortly, answering the looks. “Jim Packer took him out that way to see what was going on along the road after the race was over, and they managed to have a row with some ‘Aunt Sally’ people on Turnham Green and Lionel got a black eye. Nothing to signify, but he daren’t come home for fear mamma should ask to see him; so Jim took him into a public-house, and they have been putting raw meat to it, till Lionel thought the swelling had gone down enough for him to slip in in the dark without anyone questioning him. It might have passed for a school-row if we’d seen and heard nothing of it till to-morrow morning. He has come home nearly as late, he says, many times this spring without anyone saying a word. If I had been paying more attention to him he could not have done it.”

“And if we had made things pleasanter for him at

home, perhaps, he would not have cared to do it," said Rose, penitently.

"My dear, you have done your part," said the Fräulein, bestowing an affectionate kiss upon Rose. "I have lately noticed your efforts to comfort the others with a great deal of sympathy, though I have said little about it. It has been an example that will not, I think, be lost on the rest of our school-room party. Of course I am not in any way responsible for your brothers, and indeed never undertook anything beyond the general supervision of your lesson hours and your instruction in German, but when the heart is once interested one cannot be content with a bare fulfilment of duty. If I had seen things from the first as I do now, I might perhaps have relaxed the rules about German speaking in the evening for the sake of making the family gathering pleasanter to your brothers. Perhaps when we are all settled again we may hit on some happier plans for our leisure hours. With your father's approval I might be induced to think of it, trusting you, Rose, as I believe I may do."

Could the Fräulein be actually acknowledging that there were things more important than speaking German?—and did she mean to say that some conduct of Rose's had opened her eyes to this new idea?

Maggie and Lilly could hardly believe it, and the astounding compliment was equally lost on Rose; for while the Fräulein had been speaking some sounds outside the house, which reached the school-room through the open window, wholly absorbed her attention. The area-gate had certainly opened and shut again, and there was a second ring and a loud single knock at the back-door. It was not likely that Florence should come home that way; yet from the moment the area-

gate moved Rose felt sure it meant something, and when she heard voices in conversation with the servants at the back-door she could sit still no longer.

"Do let me run down and find out what is happening?" she begged the Fräulein.

"Only a call from some friends of the servants, with whom they are gossiping over the events of the day, I am afraid," said the Fräulein.

"But I think I hear Teddy Marshall's voice," cried Rose. "Oh, Fräulein, I must go; he knows something, I am certain, and perhaps the servants will send him away without listening to what he has come to tell us."

"Come back at once, if it is nothing, then," said the Fräulein; and with this half-permission Rose escaped from the room.

When she reached the lower story the conversation at the back-door had been transferred to the kitchen. There the servants were all gathered eagerly round some one who had just entered, and as Rose came up a movement among them let her see Mrs. Marshall holding Teddy by the hand. She was in the middle of a long speech, of which Rose caught some sentences before her presence was perceived by any one of the eager group.

"That is just what I'm coming to, if you'll let me go on. Dr. Daubeney, he would have come himself as soon as the poor young lady had been put to bed, and her dear foot bound up; but, sir, says I, I'm a mother myself, and I've known what it is to lie on a sick-bed and worrit about my children; and if there's anyone that ought to take the news to the poor lady, as it might prove the death of, if not broke gently, it's me—seeing that my boy Teddy was the one to help the poor thing up when the omnibus wheel had as good as



gone over her, and that the little dear met with the accident when she was coming to see my girl."

"Accident!—Florence!" cried Rose. "Oh, Mrs. Marshall, tell me about it, please!"

At the sound of her voice, Teddy ran up to her, and took her hand.

"Don't cry, miss; the other little miss is a deal more frightened than 'urt. Law, it ain't nothing. I should 'ave jumped up and runned away—and little miss did walk a 'olding of my 'and, from the crossing at the end of the street where she was knocked down, and where I and a gentleman 'elped 'er up, to the bottom of our staircase. 'Then she turns all white and trembly, and I leaves 'er a-sitting on the steps, and runs up and fetches mother."

"Giving me such a start, as I don't know when I've 'ad," struck in Mrs. Marshall, who by no means approved of having the narrative taken out of her hands. "It was 'alf-a-pint of milk I'd sent 'im, Teddy there, to fetch, in our biggest white jug, for I won't deny that the brown one 'ad a sup of beer in it for father's supper; and when he runs in panting you may believe me, it was my big white jug I thought of first. Teddy, I said, speak the truth, if you 'ave been and broke the jug—for, says I, a lie is what I can't a-bear; and instead of answering, he seized 'old of my gown and dragged me down-stairs, and it was not till we'd got to the first landing he could bring out a word. 'It's a young lady that wants you, mother,' says he at last—'a little lady from the 'ouse where they give me a music-cart and chicken for my dinner'—for he's never forgot that, I can assure you, miss, or given up talking about it. So then I ran down to the bottom of the house, and there was your sister, poor little dear, sitting as white as a

sheet on the lowest step, and Mrs. Chapman 'ad come out of the kitchen, with one or two more, to look at 'er."

"Oh, poor Florence!" cried Rose; "but was she very much hurt? What had happened? Do tell me, please, as quickly as you can!"

"As to what 'ad 'appened, miss, you must ask Teddy, for I've never rightly made out whether it were an omnibus, or a man carrying a ladder, or a party of drunken men coming out of a public-house, as knocked your sister down. Some said one thing, and some another, and I 'aven't 'ad time yet to ascertain; but as for 'ow much she's 'urt, Dr. Daubeney would not let me set out till the surgeon as was sent for 'ad seen 'er; for, says he, you'll only make 'em more anxious if you run off with half a tale, and I am to say that there is no bones broke, only a badly-sprained ankle and a bruised back, that will maybe keep the poor little lady in bed for some time, but that won't have worse consequences, the doctor 'opes."

"But how did she get to Dr. Daubeney's house? What made you think of carrying her there?"

"She told me it was there she was going, when, on getting out of an omnibus that had brought her from this end of London, she took a wrong turn, and wandered about till she was knocked down at the corner of our street, just as Teddy was passing by. He knew 'er in a moment, bless him! he's that sharp, is my Teddy; and seeing a crowd getting about 'er, and 'er ready to cry, he comes up and says he, Come along to mother, for it's mother always with 'im. Such a boy as he is for 'is mother—thinking nothing can be done without me. When I see the poor little dear a-sitting on the steps, as white as a sheet of paper, and

shaking all over, I was ready to take 'er up in my arms and carry 'er to our place and put 'er in Rose's bed ; but she began to cry as if 'er heart would break when I named it, and sobbed out that she must see Miss Daubeney. So Mrs. Chapman she ran and fetched a cab, and I lifted 'er in, and we went to the doctor's house together. I held 'er poor foot on my knee as we went, and she felt a bit easier, poor dear ! and asked Teddy (for of course, miss, he 'ad put his self in the cab along with us) if I was his mother and Rose's ? and then, miss, she told me something that 'as made my heart lighter than it's been these weeks past. I don't say as your sister was right to come out without leave, her mother being ill and all ; but I do say I shall bless 'er for coming so far to speak up for my girl as long as I live."

"Come up-stairs to the school-room, and tell Fräulein von Bohlen and my sisters all about it," exclaimed Rose, remembering suddenly that the kitchen was not the best place for explanations. "Mamma is settled for the night and must not be disturbed, but our governess and my brothers and sisters are waiting anxiously for news of Florence, and will want to hear all you can tell them. Teddy will be careful not to make any noise on the stairs, for fear of awakening mamma, won't you, Teddy ?"

Teddy looked a model of discretion ; but cook and Anne (who did not like to lose all chance of cross-questioning the principal witness) put in a suggestion that he had better stay down-stairs and eat a bit of cold chicken that chanced to be in the larder, and a corner of currant-tart, for his supper ; and though Mrs. Marshall made some faint objections and apologies for Teddy's probable appetite, the thought was too

manifestly a good one to be put aside. They left Teddy established on Anne's knee, while cook searched the larder, and they found the Fräulein and Claude at the school-room door, preparing to come down-stairs to see what was keeping Rose so long. Rose set their anxiety about Florence at rest in a few words; and then Mrs. Marshall had the satisfaction of telling the story quite through in her own way. She had brought her narrative to the point—of relating that Florence had confided to her that she was able to prove Rose's innocence of the theft of the gold thimble, and that her visit to Miss Daubeny was for that purpose—when the Professor returned home, and Rose rushed down to the hall to bring him up-stairs, to hear a third version of Florence's adventures from Mrs. Marshall. He was greatly relieved when it was made clear to him that Florence was safe at Dr. Daubeny's house; but, wearied as he was, he could not rest till he had seen her, and ascertained at first-hand that the injuries she had received were not more serious than Mrs. Marshall represented them to be. He begged the children all to go to bed, promising that news of Florence's state should be brought to them on his return; and then he again set forth in a cab, taking Mrs. Marshall and Teddy with him, to drop them at the Models on his way to Dr. Daubeny's.

What a long, long day it seemed to Rose, since she had heard Maggie's canary sing in the morning, and received that letter! She fancied when she got into bed that she had so much to think over she should not be ready to go to sleep for hours and hours, yet it was from a very decided doze that she started up to find the Professor, with a candle in his hand, standing by her bedside. He stooped down and gave her such

a kiss as her mother used to give in the days when she had been well enough to make late visits to little beds and bestow midnight kisses.

"I am glad to see you have been asleep," he said. "You must be tired after your exertions to-day. I came to tell you that I left Florence freer from pain and inclined to sleep, and that I have had a conversation with her that has lessened for me the pain both of hers and Lionel's conduct. It has been very bad, but I understand how it has arisen, and I hope that this crisis may be the beginning of better things for them both."

"You will forgive them, then?"

"Yes, certainly; though that does not mean not punish them. The worst punishment for their wrongdoing I cannot keep from them if I would. I can only pray that it may not come to them both in the shape of a life-long regret and remorse. Good-night, my dear little daughter; whatever happens you will always have it to remember that you have been your mother's comfort and mine through an anxious day."

With this last word Rose could not but sleep in peace.

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## CHAPTER XXI.

### BROTHERS AND SISTERS.

THERE was a good deal for Rose to do the next day. The household was stirring early, for the children were all to be sent away in different directions during the course of the morning, and Rose's first business was to

go up to Lionel's attic, and comfort him in a terrible paroxysm of grief he fell into, when his father had made known to him that he was to be sent away to Ipswich that very day without seeing his mother again, and out of the way of getting constant news of her. This, too, because his father said he could not, after last night's revelations, burden himself with the anxiety of looking after an untrustworthy member of the family while his mind was so sorrowfully preoccupied. Whether Lionel's home life ended with to-day, and he was to be sent eventually to a boarding-school in Germany where his Ipswich cousins were being educated, was, he had been told, a question for further consideration; but he had been made to feel that whatever course was pursued for the future, it would be long before the confidence with which he had been treated could be restored. It could not be expected of Lionel that he should talk out his trouble and acknowledge his repentance openly to Rose, as Claude in like circumstances might have done; but it was a great proof of softening of heart in him that he sent for her to help him to pack, and allowed her now and then to come and sit by him while he rolled about on the floor of his room and relieved his feelings by vehement abuse of Jim Packer, the "Aunt Sally" people, Hampton races, and himself for falling their victim. It was a good sign, too, that through all the half-growled, half-sobbed-out sentences, there was no questioning of the justice of his punishment, and that he did not pronounce anything a "disgusting shame," but his own folly in letting himself be drawn further and further into partnership with Jim Packer's secret doings.

"I thought it was a shame," he said, sitting up at last. "When we had been allowed to make a sort of

friend of Jim, and when we had let him make himself useful to us in lots of little ways, to turn stiff at once and treat him like a servant. I thought it a shame. I did not know then——”

“But now you do know,” said Rose gently; “so after this you will always believe that when papa says a thing that looks a little hard there is most likely a kind reason for it at the bottom. Even when it is such a really hard thing to bear as this going further away from home than the rest of us while mamma is ill!”

Lionel growled out an assent, and after this the growls died away into an occasional deep sob, as he gave Rose instructions about various treasures that were to be given to Willie in case it was decided he was not to come home again, but accompany his cousins to their horrid German school after the next holidays.

“Papa says,” he remarked in a very shaky voice, “that one reason for sending me away is that Willie is so fond of me, and that now he shall be afraid of my example hurting him. I had better never have noticed him, I suppose, since I can only do him harm.”

“Oh no, no, he did not mean that,” cried Rose; “and you know, Lionel, mamma always loved you to notice the little ones. You will always be able to remember that you pleased her that way more than any of us—if——”

“Don’t say it—I can’t hear it—I won’t hear it,” cried Lionel, dashing his head down between his hands again. “Papa said it—oh! and I never shall be able to forget how he looked all the rest of my life. If *that* happens——”

“But we hope it will not,” said Rose earnestly. “I can’t help hoping very, very much myself now that Dr. Spencer has come; and, Lionel, dear, though you are

going further away than the rest, you need not feel as if you were shut out. There is only one thing we can any of us do for mamma during this dreadful week, and you can take part in that. Let us fix on some hour in the day when we can all join in praying for her recovery, and I will take care that Claude and Maggie and Lilly know what we settle. Then we shall be all together doing what we can for her."

The suggestion seemed to comfort Lionel, and by the time the hour was decided on, the Professor himself came up-stairs to say that the cab which was to take Lionel to the station was at the door, and Rose slipped away, not to embarrass Lionel by her presence in anything he might have to say to his father during these precious last moments.

The Fräulein and Maggie and Lilly were busy packing up school-books and work to take with them to Mrs. Fanshawe's house, where they were to spend the next fortnight; and Rose supposed she was to accompany them, till about a quarter of an hour before the move was made, when her father sent for her into his dressing-room.

"My dear," he began, hastily, "we have not been able to keep the knowledge of Florence's accident from your mother. It is most unlucky that she has had to hear it to-day; but Dr. Spencer thinks it better for her to know the truth than that any hesitation in our manner of answering her questions about you all should awaken uneasy suspicion. She has borne the news calmly, I am thankful to say, but she has set her heart on your remaining with Florence at Dr. Daubeny's till she is well enough to be moved to Russell Square, and I have promised to send you there at once. Your mother wants to speak to you now, and give you some



directions. Go in there, and don't let her see that you are at all nervous or afraid."

Rose did not think she was, the pleasure of seeing mamma again was so much the most prominent thought. There were some arrangements and preparations for the surgeon's visit going on in the room, but Rose would not look at or think of them. She walked straight to the bed, where mamma was waiting for her with outstretched hand.

"My darling Rose, shall you mind going to nurse Florence in a strange house, since nurse cannot be with her nor Aunt Rachel, and I am of no use to anyone? It will comfort me to know that you are with her."

"Mamma, how could I mind," cried Rose, cheerfully. "Besides, I have been wishing to get to know Dr. Daubeny's daughter for months past. There is nothing that could have been planned for me while I am away from you that I should like so well."

"And you will comfort poor Florence, my dear? I think you know all the points on which I am anxious for her. You won't let her give way to fits of crying? and if her throat should be at all bad, you will make a point of fetching nurse from Russell Square to look at it. She knows the first symptoms of a bad attack coming on, and will see the proper remedies applied. I trust you, Rose; I know you will remember all the little things I am particular about in illness, and carry out my wishes faithfully. It is great rest to me to have that confidence; I don't know what I should do to-day if I had not found out during this last year that I might always count on your obedience to my wishes."

"I will try all I can, dearest mamma," said Rose;

"and papa will come every day to see after us, and help us, and Florence will be quite happy, I am sure, and never give trouble again after getting your message."

A few more loving words and another kiss, and the interview was over ; and Rose found her father waiting outside the door to take her away.

The doctors were to come at one o'clock, and it was now twelve, so the departure had to be hurried. Claude had received an invitation from Mrs. Papillon to spend the fortnight with Walter, and was much cheered at the prospect of having his friend's society in the evenings ; and Mrs. Fanshawe and Lucy were in the drawing-room waiting to carry off the Fräulein and her pupils. Lucy made great lamentation over Rose's desertion, but Rose could not cordially echo her complaints. Lucy's gay face and merry talk would, she felt, be as oppressive in one way as Mrs. Fanshawe's foreboding looks would be in another. Maggie and Lilly might, perhaps, find a medium state of spirits and hopes between the two, but Rose did not think she could have borne it. Where she was going she would not only have the comfort of a definite duty to take up her time, but, she hoped, the kind of sympathy that would be most helpful to her. Anne accompanied Rose in a cab to Dr. Daubeny's house, and during the long quiet drive Rose had time for many thoughts. How often since the day when she had first passed through those streets with Aunt Rachel had she planned occasions for making the acquaintance of the other "young lady with the bag," and how unlike all these were to the sorrowful circumstances under which their first interview was about to take place !

## CHAPTER XXII.

## AFTERNOON TEA AND TALK.

"I AM dreadfully ashamed of myself, but I must tell you that the day after Rose Marshall sent her letter to you, a very few hours before your sister set forth to rescue her from unjust suspicions, I found the little butterfly-brooch that had caused all the commotion in one of the divisions of my own paint-box. It must have dropped from my neck-ribbon while I was painting without my seeing it, and of course one's paint-box is the last place one thinks of looking in for a lost trinket; so as it was a valuable brooch that had belonged to mamma a great search was made. The servants chose to be angry and to bully my poor little waiting-maid, and in consequence—an undeserved reward for my carelessness—I have got two new friends, and full liberty to like an old one I was beginning to be doubtful about, as much as ever I please."

The speaker was Jessië Daubeny, and as she finished her sentence she raised herself from the inclined-plane, where for the last two months she had been obliged to pass the greater part of each day, and held out her hand to Rose Ingram, who was seated near her.

A day and a half had passed since Rose's arrival, but this was the first moment when she had had leisure and inclination for making acquaintance with her young hostess, or even felt equal to the task of entering upon the subject of Rose Marshall's justification.

Now late in the afternoon of the second day she had had a visit from her father, who had brought the

longed-for news, that the dreaded operation had been successfully performed, that her mother had since slept well, and that the doctors on seeing her that morning had found her stronger and better than they had dared to expect. After her father had left her, for he could not long be absent from home, she had taken the joyful intelligence to the bed-room where Florence lay still suffering great pain, and had had the satisfaction of seeing the set-frown of suffering on her forehead relax and a shade of colour come into her white face, and of hearing her say she thought that now if Rose would make her bed comfortable she could sleep a little. This had been done, and after watching till Florence was fast asleep Rose stood at the open door of the room, which chanced to be just opposite Jessie's sitting-room. So when Rose Marshall came up with her little mistress's afternoon cup of tea, Jessie caught sight of her visitor, and sent the White Rose to bring her across the passage to sit with her. Tea was over, and they were now alone, and had even got so far in making acquaintance during one hour's talk that it did not seem at all odd to be shaking hands, or that Jessie should congratulate herself on having a new friend. Not odd but very nice, for Rose had at the moment been thinking that Jessie Daubeney's face, though it was very different from anything she had pictured, was a very pleasant surprise after all. She had expected to see a gentle, interesting-looking invalid, with a lovely pale face, a little like her mother's, and a soft voice and patient meek ways; and, instead, she had before her a bright-eyed, eager, talkative little personage, whose thin brown face, though it could not be called anything but very plain, had so many changes of expression, and so much drollery of glance and gesture that Rose thought she should never be

tired of looking at it. Lucy Fanshawe's laughing blue eyes did not express so much mirth as those brown ones could every now and then, ringed as they were with dark hollows and shadows of suffering; but Rose saw at once that it was a different sort of gaiety from Lucy's. Not the kind that springs from overflowing animal spirits and freedom from care, but something that, while it went deeper into the character, could exist side by side with grave and even melancholy thought. Her companion spoke again before she had done looking at her.

"I have something else to tell you, to bring you to a perfect understanding of the rights of the case. I could not mention it yesterday for fear it should make you think Florence's expedition too provoking, but now that you are happier about your mother I don't believe you will grudge me what has been the greatest excitement I have known for a year. Well, when Florence arrived I had just been hearing a full confession from little Mary Anne Sims of the part she had acted in this affair of the gold thimble, and we were on the point of sending for Mrs. Marshall to let her know how triumphantly her little daughter's character was cleared. Mary Anne brought up my tea yesterday afternoon instead of Rose, whose eyes were in no state to be looked at. I made some cheerful remark to her about having found my brooch, blaming my own carelessness for its loss, and saying how sorry I was to have caused such a disturbance down stairs. To my great surprise she made a rush at me, spilling the hot tea all over my dress, and burst out with the whole history of her theft and the wicked way in which she had thrust the suspicion of it on poor Rose. I had some difficulty in getting at the facts of the case, for as you may imagine

they were not very coherently put together, and poor little Mary Anne had had no previous practice in confessing faults, her powers of speech having hitherto been solely given to excusing and concealing them. It seems, however, that she has been gradually softening all through the spring under the influence of Rose Marshall's patience in bearing undeserved suspicion, and friendliness towards her in spite of the wrong she had done her. The sight of Rose's grief when the second accusation was brought against her broke Mary Anne down altogether, and forced her to tell the truth and clear her friend. A little late, perhaps, for she held her tongue while the terror of being held responsible for the lost brooch was hanging over the household; but she says she had quite made up her mind not to let Rose suffer, and since she has taken this great step of confessing the old fault, one believes in her sincerity."

"So you knew that happened on our Charade night before Florence told you."

"All but the small circumstance that a member of our family had known who was the guilty person all along."

"Your father knows that now, I suppose, as well as you?—Poor Florence!—I wonder how she will feel when she knows that Rose Marshall's character had been cleared without her interference, and that her share need never have been known to anyone out of our house, if she had not been so hasty."

"She does know it, for I told her this morning, when you had gone to fetch Nurse Lewis to look at her throat, and I went in to keep her company and talk for an hour. She knows, and, as I should have expected, does not trouble her at all. She is almost glad of

all the pain and shame she can get just now; it makes her more able to bear herself. I understand that."

"I am so glad you do, and that you said just now — *two* new friends — it has not turned you against Florence; you will like her all the same.

"We shall be friends all the same, closer, perhaps, than we ever should have been if all this had not happened. You don't know what an event this has been in my quiet life. You see Florence was brought to my sitting-room, for papa was out and Miss Scott is away for a week, so there was no one but me at hand to decide what was to be done at the first moment. It was to me that Florence told her story straight out, and I could not help admiring her for having so much resolution and for insisting on my listening to all she had to say in favour of Rose Marshall, before she would let us examine her foot, or do anything to relieve the pain she was suffering."

"Poor Florence! But how dreadful for her to have to confess to a stranger things that she had been keeping from us all at home. I can't think how she could bring herself to do it."

"I can. Ah, yes; I see that I have more in common with Florence than you have. I can quite understand that it was easier for her to come off here in a great fuss and excitement, and accuse and humble herself before all the world, with the object, as she thought, of saving an innocent person from punishment, than it would have been just to have gone to your father or your governess and owned she had been a disobedient child. Mind, I don't say that was not the right thing to do. I am only saying that it seems to me the hardest thing, and that I can quite imagine myself acting in the same way in her circumstances."

"It seems so much more natural to go to one's own people when one has got into a mess."

"Yes, to you; *you* are one of the straightforward happy people, who never see things awry because you are never squinting back at yourself; but I am one of the nasty squinting sort, and I have a sly fellow-feeling for sufferers like myself, whose cranky tempers get rubbed into sores by contact with the people about them, and who sometimes have to fly out-of-doors for relief. You must not think that I let Florence hurt her throat by talking to me this morning, for I really did nearly all the talking myself; but by just the few little things she told me in explanation of her confession I feel to know the whole of her life, and to have got inside her as I hardly ever did with anyone before.

I know just how she has felt about being the ugly blackly one among you all, whom strangers always overlook, and who had to stay in the nursery and be cooped long after she had grown tired of nursery ways and was longing for something beyond them. When I can quite understand too her determination to be the clever one among you, and shine in that way if she could not be pretty or nice, and her disappointment and vexation when you seemed without any trouble to win in the first place even there, and the reaction from over-work to self-indulgence and giving way altogether. It is like a little bit out of my own life."

"I can't fancy you like that, living alone with your father."

"I am thinking of the time while my father was in India, when I lived with some cousins and was sickly and suffering without having any acknowledged ailment."

"But it is all different with you now?"



"I don't feel so nasty; but I am afraid it is not because I am altered in the way you are thinking. I hope there is a little of that; it would be odd if living with papa had not done something for me, but I believe the chief change is that it really is easier to me to have it settled. I know now that I am a cripple and humpbacked for life, and that there is no use in my comparing myself grudgingly with this person or that, or building castles in the air about growing up strong and beautiful. I am just put in a certain place, and I have got to make the best of it; and, do you know, the certainty and the being excused from planning and wondering about myself is such a rest, that I look back upon the old times, when there was hope and I did not suffer half so much, with horror. I am so much happier now! you look surprised, but Florence understood it quite when I told her."

"But Florence is not going always to be ill. You will not put it into her head to wish for that!"

"Oh no; she has got to get out of herself in some other way, and perhaps I shall be able to help her just a little. There must be plenty of other and better roads by which to reach contentment with one's own share of gifts, or rather with the lack of those one has taken it into one's head to covet. It would be quite ridiculous, would it not, to say there was *no* way of carrying the little bundle of wants when the big bundle had been made light."

"It would be like saying God could not help one about a little thing."

"Ah, I know what I will do while Florence is kept prisoner in that room: I will get papa to bring up his microscope and show her some wonders. It will be a great deal better than my talking to her. He will

make her see how beautifully the little things are cared for, and she will get out of herself in admiring them. What can it matter whether one's own nose is thick or fine, while there are more beautiful and strange things in a single drop of water than one can count in a week. It was such a happy day for me when I first acknowledged that to myself.

"What a great many different ways there are by which one may be helped, and I do believe you have found out the right one for Florence. Do you know, I have always had a hope you would turn out a friend since I heard the children at the hospital speak of you, and found out from your father at our house one evening that you were the same person."

Jessie laughed. "You have not put it very clearly; but I understand, and I will acknowledge something to you, that you may see I am not pretending when I call myself nasty. My father came home that evening and told me he had found such a charming friend for me. I won't tell you all he said about you; but his praise took me the wrong way, for it was given to the very qualities (simplicity, and all that) which I am always hating myself for being utterly without. So I took a perverse fit—made up my mind that you were a simpering 'Lucy Fairchild' sort of girl, the kind I detest, and I found some excuse for putting off our meeting whenever papa proposed to bring us together. Will you forgive me, when I confess how mistaken I was?"

"Indeed I will. I don't think I should like having a friend found for me myself."

"And since by rights we ought to have been acquaintances of long standing, and it has taken an accident to bring us together, we will make up our

minds to begin at the point we should have reached in all these months, and be close friends at once."

"And we won't forget that Rose Marshall and Mary Anne Sims were the starting-point of our friendship. When I look back to the day when I first went to the hospital, I can hardly believe how many good things have come of it."

"Good things, as you say—for even this sad story of the gold thimble has now a bright side to it. Rose Marshall's character has come out so well during the trial she has been exposed to, that she has now won every one in the house to befriend her—even our old cook, who was at first a good deal scandalized by her dreamy, untidy ways. They will all be ready now to lend a helping hand to brush her up into a perfect little servant; and I shall look forward to keeping her near me, my friend as much as my attendant, till something very much better turns up for her. It is a grand thing for poor little Mary Anne Sims, too, that she has confessed her fault of her own accord. If she had waited till we had heard your sister's story, I don't know what would have happened. Miss Scott was getting into despair about her constant prevarications, and beginning to fear she was gaining no good with us, and must go. This will change her opinion and show her there is something hopeful about the poor child after all. You will hardly believe how the expression of her face has changed since yesterday. There is actually a dawning of openness upon it, and Rose's rejoicing over her and gratitude to her is delightful. This is all excellent news for Miss Scott. You see those two girls are our first attempts, and if they had proved failures we could hardly have asked papa to let us increase our little flock till the training-school we have in our minds is fairly set on foot."

"*We* means you and Miss Scott. She is your governess, is she not? What is she like?"

"I need only tell you that it was she who took me to the hospital and taught me to love the Sisters, and showed me that way of getting rid of myself and my crooked back. When she comes home, and your sister Florence can be moved into my pleasant sitting-room, we will show you how little of a misfortune it is to lie on one's back all day and seldom get out of doors."

"But you do get out sometimes?"

"Oh yes, on very good days; and as I have had few such this summer, perhaps I may hope for more in the autumn, when the heat is over."

"Oh, then I may look forward to your coming to our house one day, and showing mamma to you. That is what I should call a happy day, when she is well, as we may now hope she will soon be, and we are all together again. You must bring Rose Marshall and Mary Anne Sims to see mamma too—and oh, how pleasant it will be to meet and talk over this time, when all anxiety is over! I suppose I must not expect it soon, for papa warns me that it will take time for mamma to grow strong, and that we must be very patient; and, besides, to make the meeting perfect, Florence and Lionel must be at home and all must be right with them. That happy evening can hardly come this summer; but let us look to the autumn for it, when the days are beginning to be a little short and we first light the lamp for tea. In old times, before the *Fräulein* came, and mamma began to be so often unwell, we used to send down for her to drink tea with us on the first lamplight evening and make a feast of it, and a regular settling into winter ways. I hope we shall do it again this year, and that you will be there to see."

## CHAPTER XXIII.

## "HEARTS UNFEIGNEDLY THANKFUL."

ROSE had her wish, and the occasion she had planned so long beforehand proved to be even more of a family festival than she had designed, for it celebrated the return home of several members of the family, after long absence.

Mrs. Ingram and Florence, who, through part of August and September, had been growing strong together at the seaside, were indeed settled at home some time before, and had proved themselves, even to the anxious eyes of the Professor and Rose, equal to all the exertions for others and active ways that they fell into from the moment of their entering into the house.

Mrs. Ingram resumed habits of long ago, which had the effect of bringing an almost forgotten sweetness and brightness into every part of the house, and Florence acted the part of a quick-sighted, eager little handmaid to mamma in all her household occupations. This part she had assumed, never, as it seemed, to be again laid down, when the great honour of being mamma's sole companion in lodgings at the sea-side, had, at Jessie's instigation, been resigned to her by Rose to whom it had been first offered, and who consoled herself by taking good care of papa at home instead.

The household had grown accustomed to the two new sources of happiness that had come into it before the time for settling into winter ways arrived.

The visitors whose coming fell in with Rose's lamp

festival, were Maggie, who had been spending a pleasant time at Worthing, where grandmamma and Aunt Rachel were settled for the winter, and Lionel, from Ipswich, where he had passed five months' reading with a tutor, and whence he was now recalled in time to keep the last half of the autumn term at the college.

It was a matter of great rejoicing to both the school-room and the nursery children that the Professor, on receiving a good report of Lionel's industry and conduct from his tutor, had determined on allowing him to resume his school and home life. Claude had missed his constant companion more than he would have believed beforehand; Florence had felt his banishment a constant reminder of her own faults, and Willie and the little ones had faithfully mourned his absence whenever anything particularly pleasant was on foot. All were prepared to give him an enthusiastic welcome, and Rose felt glad that she had succeeded in persuading the Fräulein (much more persuadable now than in old times) to take her tea in the dusk for a week, in order that the day of the two arrivals might be signalized by the winter inauguration festival which seemed so appropriate to an autumn home-coming. Everything was propitious to the full carrying out of her views. Nurse, who had made Mrs. Marshall's acquaintance during Florence's illness, entered warmly into the project of a second tea-party in the servants' hall, at which all the Marshalls and Mary Anne Sims were to be entertained. Jessie had a good day, and bore the long drive from one end of London to the other with so little fatigue, that an hour's rest on the school-room sofa before other guests arrived enabled her to take an active part in all the fun, eclipsing even Lucy in fertility of invention while crying forfeits, and acting

charades. What was best of all, the Professor had, or made, a vacant evening, and was able not only to come up-stairs to tea and see the lamp lighted, but to remain afterwards and join in the games, adding to the mirth so wonderfully that Lionel's eyes were opened to quite a new view of his father's intellect, and he confided in Florence in the course of the evening that he began to think "being learned did not make a fellow *so* stupid after all."

For two or three of the party there were a few moments of thoughtfulness in the midst of the mirth. It was brought about by Lucy Fanshawe's drawing out the gold thimble from her pocket and paying it away as a forfeit to be cried by Mary Anne Sims. Florence, who was standing near, slipped out of the circle of players a minute afterwards, and Rose, fearing she felt ill or tired, followed her to the school-room door.

"Let us go and sit on the stairs and cool ourselves for a minute or two," she said, affectionately putting her arm round Flo's waist. "You have been standing such a long time, and I know, though you never say anything about it, that your foot does hurt you still when you use it too much."

They had not been long alone when the White Rose came to look for them, and Rose Ingram pointed her to a seat by her side on the third step. The school-room door stood open just opposite, and the three little girls seated in the dark had a very pretty view of the gay scene within. In the corner near the door they had just a glimpse of Professor Ingram's head as it was turned sideways to speak to Mr. Marshall, who, with his youngest child in his arms, was standing just outside the doorway looking on at the games. On the old sofa at the far end of the room sat Mrs. Ingram, looking

like a queen, Rose thought, in her black velvet gown, her face as gentle and fair as ever, but with soft hues of returning health on the delicate round cheeks instead of the flushes of pain that had burned on them so long. Teddy had deserted his mother to sit on the folds of the black velvet at Mrs. Ingram's feet, and to gaze admiringly into her face, cautiously putting up a rough but clean little hand now and then to stroke the soft warm dress, whose texture awoke his delighted curiosity; but to make up for this, Tiny and Trotty had stationed themselves at the other end of the sofa by Mrs. Marshall, and were lost in admiration of the scarlet and green bows in her cap, and the rainbow tints of the scarf that Rose had manufactured out of old antimacassars half-a-year ago. Mrs. Marshall was holding forth energetically, apparently on the relative plumpness of Trotty's and Teddy's legs, and Mrs. Ingram was listening with a look of great interest on her face. After a long loving gaze at this scene the two Roses turned and looked at each other.

"I wonder," said the Red Rose, "whether in all London there are girls as happy as we two to-night, in seeing our mothers seated there side by side looking so well."

"And oh, so lovely! ain't they, miss, both on 'em. To be sure, my mother has not all the pretty red and white in her cheeks that yours has, but then they are both alike in this—they have faces that it does one's heart good to look at, and that make the house *home*. And then to see father standing there in a black coat! I never wish for the happy valley now, miss; but, as you say, I wonder whether there are any other girls anywhere as well off as we are for fathers and mothers, and brothers and sisters, and homes."



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
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